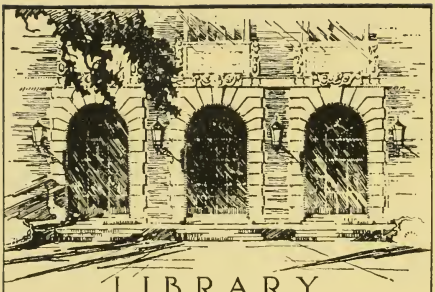

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CHUMS.

CHUMS:

A Tale of the Queen's Navy.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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CHUMS:

A TALE OF THE QUEEN'S NAVY.

CHAPTER I.

GIBRALTAR once more, or somewhere near it.

St. Roque is a town of Andalusia, situated about six miles from the Rock, and thither, on this Sunday afternoon, are flocking the inhabitants of the country for twenty miles round. There we shall see most of our friends of the "living stream" at the big gates. Every animal and every conveyance is on the move towards the same place, the "Plaz de Toros de San Roque." Old men and children, young men and maidens, all rush off to the bull-fight, except, perhaps, some few inhabitants of Gib, who are

averse to Sunday recreation. There will the head of all the Lawrences enjoy his pipe, and believe that he is giving Mary and Maggie a great treat, never imagining that there could exist anyone so soft as to object to watching the butchery.

Mr. Lawrence has not been actually *drunk* for several days. Mary's engagement at the theatre is just over, and her salary was paid this morning. This treat is the result thereof. To-morrow they are to sail for Southampton.

A programme of about the right number of years ago tells us that boxes are thirty reals, sillones (arm-chairs) are seven reals. "Entrada di Ombra:" Admission, that is, to the shady side of the enclosure, is three reals, and to the sunny side two reals, the shady and sunny ones seating themselves as best they can. It is probable that there were some *shady* ones on the sunny side.

Lawrence had fully persuaded himself that he, and he alone, had provided the

requisite coin for the day's outing, and had evidently determined to be lavish of it. They put up the horse and trap which he had hired for the day, then paid their money, and took their seats in the shaded arm-chairs. The Plaz is a large, substantial building, capable of holding several thousand people, and on this particular Sunday it was fairly full. Bull-fights only take place once, or perhaps twice a year at San Roque; the same at Algesiras.

Punctually at four p.m. the performance commenced with a walk round by matadores, picadores, capiadores, and goodness knows how many more highly-*mettled* ores. Picturesque beggars they looked, too, as they rode or marched past the box in which the governor of Algesiras and the alcalde of St. Roque were seated.

After the procession, all retire from the arena, except the picadores, six in number, who draw up their horses on each

side of the door by which the bull is to enter, and which an understrapper—who, judging from his mysterious swagger, is probably a Spanish count in straitened circumstances—now approaches, and awaits the alcalde's signal to open.

The signal is given; the bolts are withdrawn, and the doors flung back by the man of disguised nobility, who, without pausing to dissemble, retires quickly behind one of the places of refuge—*i.e.*, boarding erected against the walls of the arena, allowing room for a couple of men to hide behind them in perfect safety—and the bull is free to enter as soon, and in such manner. as his roving fancy may dictate. Short is the pause that follows; and we can imagine the bull—furious and impatient at the noises which, for the last hour or more, have kept him wakeful and restless—staring astonished at the open space suddenly spread before him. Only for a few seconds does he pause; then, with a bellow, he

rushes madly into the centre of the arena. Arrived there, he stops suddenly, angry and uncertain ; and, throwing his head aloft once or twice with short, quick jerks, he paws the sand, glaring fiercely from one to another of the picadores, who motionlessly sit their horses, awaiting his onset. Preceded by a defiant snort, bravely and grandly it comes ; and the few who have to bear the brunt—horses, men, and spears, equally powerless to withstand the terrific rush—are rolled over in the sand. Without stopping, he endeavours to tear along on his mad course, but its force is soon spent, and the remaining picadores thrust him off with their spears until he is at a standstill once more, bleeding profusely, and breathing heavily, though fiercely as ever. Struggling to their feet as well as they can with legs encased almost to the thighs in armour plating, the fallen picadores either remount their horses in the arena, or if unable to do that, are led or

dragged outside, their comrades keeping the bull in play and endeavouring to prevent his reaching and goring them during their retreat. Now, too, the refuges are useful, and the thud of the bull's horns against the boards, scarce a second after a man had crawled behind them, leaves little doubt as to what would have been the result, had *animal* instead of vegetable been the opposing substance. However, one does not care much for the men, and one feels rather pleased than otherwise to see a picadore hurt. Nearly all one's sympathy is for the horses. They, poor devils, are old, scraggy, and fit only for the knacker's yard. With one eye blindfolded, so that they may not see what they are being spurred to encounter; gored by the bull, thrashed by their riders—the bold picadores—and ruthlessly kept going, until bleeding, torn, and half disembowelled, they at length succumb altogether, and are dragged out amidst the bravos of the de-

lighted Spaniards. No; one does not care much for the men. The 'cloak men'—I forget the proper name for them—remain almost constantly in the arena, armed only with coloured mantles, which they use to keep up the bull's anger and excitement; flickering them playfully across his eyes, or throwing them over his horns and then hiding themselves in the refuges, taking care always that the bull is close at their heels when they disappear. The closer the shave, the greater the excitement, and we entirely go to the bull fight for excitement, although we probably leave it in disgust.

Another breed of sportsmen now appears, whose instruments of torture are long darts, gaily decorated with many-coloured streamers, and which, when stuck some inches into his flesh, are calculated to cause the bull considerable annoyance and irritation. Ingenious Spaniard! Cunning tormentors!

These last arrivals take their stand di-

rectly in front of the bull, and when he makes his rush, stepping quickly on one side, they stick their darts in behind his horns. This is undoubtedly dangerous work, and a good dartman, one who can stick both his darts *well* in, is rapturously applauded. It looks an easy thing to do, and, about this part of the entertainment, the alcalde is pestered by men and boys eager to try their hands at it. About this time, too, the ordinary Englishman begins to long for a sight of human blood—*Spanish* blood; the blood of the noble swells of the arena. Needless to say, his longing is rarely gratified. It is not in the "noble swells" programme.

But now commences the last scene. Enter matador armed with dagger. Lively music by the band, and the fun gets fast and furious. With darts and cloaks the wretched bull is *tickled* and flicked until he rushes and staggers about the arena, bellowing with rage and pain.

Now is the time for the *pas de deux (?)*; the bull seems to know it as well as the matador, and a grand sight it is to see the noble brute—the *bull* I mean—in these last few moments of his life, shaking off all giddiness and fatigue, stand erect, bleeding at every pore, and, with a hoarse, gurgling bellow, rush furiously upon his intended slayer. Quickly as he plunges forward, the matador springs to meet him, and, as the bull's head and neck are lowered in readiness for the toss, the dagger of the matador enters to its hilt, and the final act is over for the bull number one.

Five more bulls are to fall to the dagger this Sunday afternoon, each victim affording twenty minutes of brisk and cheery sport. Much the same performance is gone through with each; one particularly healthy animal, who succeeded in scoring six horses —all lying dead in the arena at the same time—coming in for quite an ovation—(Spanish).

Having taken this glimpse of the light recreation the Lawrences have to enjoy, we will watch them in their stalls. I should explain that it had been decided before Monkton left Gibraltar that little Maggie was to take the name of Lawrence, and was to be treated as Mary's sister; an arrangement with which the child was delighted; but she still called her adopted sister by the old name, "Mammy."

When first they entered the Plaza, she was in a great state of excitement, and persisted in asking questions of both Mr. Lawrence and Mary until requested by the former to hold her tongue and not make a row; after which rebuff she and Mary had conversed in whispers until bull number one rushed into the arena.

Maggie had watched the procession of performers delightedly, but the bull fairly frightened her.

"Oh mammy! mammy! the tow! the

tow! it's lookin' at me," she cried, and clung to Mary, hiding her face in terror. "Are dey going to kill it?" she asked in an awe-stricken whisper.

Mary had been greatly averse to bringing the child and, indeed, to coming herself, but Lawrence had said that he'd have no affected nonsense; lots of women went and enjoyed it, he said, and so would they, when they got over the first squeamishness. Exceedingly sorry that she had not, just for the once, been firm with her father and refused to come, Mary now took the little one on her knees, persuading her to close her eyes, and endeavouring to keep her quiet by little inventions of her own about what was passing in the arena.

"There; now they are taking the great cow away," she said at last, with a sigh of relief, as the dead animal was dragged out. "I s'pose dey's going to milk it," remarked Maggie, opening her eyes and looking nervously at the arena, from which nearly

all evidences of the recent fight had been removed.

"Very likely, dear," replied that estimable but slightly inaccurate young lady.

"Do dead tows give us milt, mammy?"

"Oh, no dear," said Mary, with conviction.

"Do you think, mammy, that they milted that one first?" asked Maggie, eagerly.

"No, I don't think they milked that one, dear," was the safe reply.

"Betos you know, mammy, to-mollow's my bread-and-milt morning." This reflection evidently caused Maggie great uneasiness, she being doubtful as to whether milk would be forthcoming for her favourite meal. At any rate, she asked no more questions, and very soon, frightened by the bellow of bull number two, she again hid her face against Mary.

Towards the close of the second act, Jim Lawrence, grown somewhat tired of the performance and thinking it a long time

between the drinks, turned lazily round to scrutinise his neighbours in the stalls, and see if any amongst them looked at all like "standing" one. His thirst is quickly forgotten, his attention suddenly attracted by a young woman who is staring intently at Mary, or rather—as he afterwards discovers—at the child on her lap. She was not more than a dozen seats away, and almost immediately after he had observed her eager look, Maggie moved slightly, and exposed more of her face than before. The woman could see her distinctly now, and, reaching forward with outstretched arms, she was rising from her seat when, turning suddenly pale and drawing both hands quickly to her heart, she sank back against the stall, then fell forward upon the ground in a swoon. One or two of her neighbours felt it incumbent upon them to render assistance, but evidently considered her a nuisance. Not so, thought Mr. Jim Lawrence however; he had scented a good thing, the moment

he saw her eyes fixed upon Maggie, and telling his eldest daughter that he should not be away long, he hurried to the entrance, whither a couple of men were conveying the insensible woman. He was the only other man who had taken the trouble to interest himself in her, and he soon discovered that they were store-keepers of Gibraltar, and both able to speak English—by no means a recommendation in his eyes now; so telling them that he was a medical man, and would do all that was necessary, he added that it was quite useless for them to lose any more of the entertainment.

The rock scorpions, nothing loath to return to their hardly-paid-for stalls, assisted him to get her into one of the many go-carts in waiting, and then rushed back to their well beloved "Toros." Telling the Jehu to drive as quickly as possible to the only hotel in the place, kept by an Englishman, Lawrence proceeded to make a mental diagnosis of his patient. She was

young—apparently not more than twenty-five, good looking, but made up considerably, and *fast* even to *looseness*. Her dress was fairly good, and she looked ladylike.

Mr. Lawrence rubbed his hands. "Several likely points," he muttered. "We shall soon see whether old Jim is on the right scent. Wears a wedding ring, tho'! Ah! they all do that. I wonder she hasn't taken to widow's weeds; that's the last innocent deception. *Street* widows! ha, ha! wedded to the pavement, dying in the gutter; how will you like that, my lady?"

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVED at the hotel, he interviewed its English proprietor, explained the case in very few words, and, taking a room for his patient, had her carried up to it at once, and engaged a Spanish maid of the house to remain and assist him.

Together they laid her on the bed, and then, safe from all English-speaking intruders, our man of medicine—he had once during his vagabond existence been an assistant sick-berth attendant on board a man-of-war—brought all his science into play, to restore the woman to consciousness. Her swoon still continued, he grew nervous, and had almost decided upon retiring as gracefully as

might be, and leaving the field in possession of a real practitioner, when she moved slightly and appeared to be slowly regaining consciousness. After a few uneasy movements she spoke in a feeble, agitated voice. "My God!" she muttered. "It is not possible. Dressed like that! Looking happy with that—that other woman!—not dead!—not dead—but, I say, I killed her!" speaking louder and more wildly. "She has belonged to me; I had the right. Oh! ha! A mother's right; and I—I killed her." She almost whispered the last words, then murmured on, more indistinctly, "It could only have been a dream! my old dream again. Directly I sleep, the devil claims me." Lawrence was leaning over her, listening intently; the maid, sitting on the foot of the bed, glanced often towards the broken looking-glass. The woman soon spoke again. "It wasn't the drink

this time. How long, old tempter? how long?" She remained quiet again for a few minutes, and Lawrence, satisfied that he had made no mistake either in his doctoring or in his patient, resumed his restoration efforts.

"But if it *was* her after all!" came clearly from the woman's lips, as she started up with eyes wide open, and staring intently as they had in the theatre.

"I thought so!" she muttered, sinking back again upon the bed. "At your old tricks with me, are you? Fool that I am; I might have known it." And giving a short, bitter laugh, she asked in a hard, indifferent tone, "Where am I?" without giving Mr. Lawrence, who was now standing at her side in an attitude indicative at once of natural dignity and professional composure, time to reply, she continued, querulously, "Who may you be? a devil-

dodger! or a sky-pilot, hunting up materials for a new tract; or what?" adding with a laugh, "Don't be angry, whoever you are, old fellow."

"'It is not the cowl which makes the monk,' madam," replied the dignified doctor, in the slow, pompous tone which he considered befitted the occasion; "and I am never angry with a—a—patient. I am a doctor of medicine."

"You are a doctor!" she exclaimed, starting up again and speaking eagerly—imploringly. "Then, I am dying! tell me! I am dying, am I not?—for pity's sake, *let* me die; or doctor! doctor! see this and this. She dragged off rings and watch and thrust them into his hands. "They are yours; all I have shall be yours; *only* let me die." Then, hastily, she added, "it would not be wrong of you. I know that I am dying; and all I say is, don't stop me! You have no right to; *only* let me die."

And she clutched his arm, and continued again her desperate appeal. "Could you not—could you not *kill* me? you are kind. It would be an act of charity."

"But who says you are dying?" asked Lawrence, anxiously; quite startled out of all his pomposity. He had not made allowance for her possible death in his last hour's calculations; besides, he was, in some slight degree, shocked at her vehemence. However, he quickly resumed his original rôle of sage physician. "I trust that this is nothing serious, madam; but, as we well know, 'a small leak will sink a big ship,' and we must all be prepared for the great leveller, the grave; so, if there is anything that I can do in connection with your affairs, I shall be glad to act as your friend; remembering that 'the greatest medicine in life is a *true* friend.'"

"Yes! yes! I know you all, and the value of your truth and friendship. A woman, such as I am, understands you thoroughly; it is part of her profession. Well, you shall have my story. The last dying speech and confession of Caroline Armstrong," she cried, in a shrill news-boy's voice, jumping off the bed. "Brandy, girl. Two brandies."

Mr. Lawrence looked grave, but said nothing. Even as a medical man, he could not bring himself to forbid drinks, and the maid left the room.

"And so your name is Caroline Armstrong, my dear young lady?" he said carelessly; rather *too* carelessly for the woman, who answered sharply,

"What does my name matter to you? You will hear the only one by which I choose to be known, in my short but melancholy confession."

"'Confession of a fault makes half amends for it;' 'confession is good for

the soul,' my dear madam, as liquor is for the stomach," and the maid, having provided him with stimulant, the doctor gravely raised his glass, sipped its contents, removed it from his lips, smacked them and bringing them again into action, slowly and solemnly consumed the liquor; remarking that "Diet cures more than the doctor." More brandy having been ordered by the woman, she seated herself on the foot of the bed, and proceeded to tell her story, in the bitter, mocking tone which seemed to be habitual to her. The room, with its bare floor and shabby furniture; the strong liquor —primary cause of many a similar tale of ruin—and, lastly, the sole hearer an old hypocrite, acting a lie as he listened; all the surroundings were in keeping with the last few years of her life, as she briefly related the way in which they had been spent.

"You are curious and inquisitive, old

fellow. One can see that with half an eye," she commenced. "Well, here is news for you. My proper name is not Caroline Armstrong, although I choose to be called so. My right to be so called is just as much as belongs to any woman to bear the name of the man whose mistress she is—or was—no more. My own name I lost when I lost myself—sold myself—for love. It's easy to imagine me simple and innocent, eh?"

Mr. Lawrence gave several thoughtful nods, raised his eyes to heaven, and —decided to say nothing. Caroline Armstrong, as we may now call her, continued:—

"You are religious, I suppose? Running what is called a godly race?"

Mr. Lawrence bowed; he trusted so.

"So was I once," she went on. "I was High Church, and fasted regularly. My father was a poor country lawyer, and a great admirer of my religious views. Ha,

ha! Four years ago I met the man who was, for a time, my life and soul, as I was his 'sherry and bitters,' his 'dash of brandy.'"

She paused and looked at Lawrence, who was regarding his empty glass attentively.

"Well, I quite understood the position, notwithstanding my simplicity. His people wished him to make a great match, he told me. He *lied!* I know it now. He was even then engaged to a girl whom he could never love, but was being forced to marry. Ah, ha! He *lied!* Finally he told me that he loved me passionately, and that whether he married or remained single, I should be ever near him, ever loved by him. He *lied!* God knows how he lied."

She took another sip of the brandy, then pushed her glass towards Lawrence, who sighed, nodded sympathetically, raised his eyes towards heaven, and finished the liquor.

"Well," she continued again, drumming emphatically on the table; "I had met him first at church, and many were our subsequent meetings there; but fasting and ritual could not save me, neither did I wish them to. With my eyes open, knowing that I was not to be his wife, but *not* knowing how soon such men's love cools, I trusted him, and loved him. We went abroad together, and, not until after my baby was born did we have any disagreement. But then it came. Never mind the cause, Old Curiosity. My position did not improve my moral tone, probably; besides, I was pretty, and fond of men's admiration, and he was a brute. I can call him that, and still love him. He hated the baby, and was tired of me, and I might go to the devil. And, with little compunction, I *went;* or, at any rate, made a fresh start on my journey. On a lower stage this time; money was the object—not love. I soon found another

protector, and another; each one giving me the same parting advice, each one leaving me nearer the goal. My life for the next two years was what you call 'gay.' Religious scruples did not bother me, and the baby was being well taken care of. But still—I had loved, and the man lived! Once more I was a fool. Hearing that he had come to Gibraltar, I took the child with me, and followed him."

She stopped, and looked sharply at Lawrence. She fancied he had started when she said that the man had come to Gib, but it was evident that he had only moved to reach some more brandy, for he now slowly raised the glass to his lips; and she continued, speaking with increased bitterness:—

"They say that there's no fool like an old fool. *I* say that there's no fool—no such reckless, miserable fool—as a love-sick girl. What could I expect? I went

to see him—my sworn lover, Jack Armstrong—on board his yacht, and—he would not recognise me. He wanted youth and freshness, he said, not rouge and powder. Curse him! May he die—as I shall."

Lawrence caught himself just commencing a nod of approval, but checked himself and said:—

"Your narrative, my dear young lady, interests me as few things can now. Pray proceed."

She turned upon him, suspiciously, not quite sure what to make of him yet, and spoke again, rapidly:—

"One of his friends, an old chum of mine—such a *handsome* fellow—had seen me, and would have let me stay with him, but for the child. What could I do? I left her in the streets of Gibraltar—to *die;* went back to see Jack Armstrong's friend, and tell him that I had sent her to England, and was free of that incumbrance, and found that he had left that morning

for *Madrid.* Lost! A murderess! I came out here to drink, and try to kill myself. And I shall succeed; I feel it."

She pressed her hands quickly to her heart, and looked triumphantly at Lawrence, as though challenging him to deny the nearness of her death.

Her medical adviser denied nothing. "A sad tale," he said, meditatively; "but the child, dear madam? The poor innocent babe?"

"Is dead!" almost shrieked the woman. "I told you. *Dead.*"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Lawrence, soothingly. "You—ah—you *deserted* her, as you say; that does not necessarily prove that she *died.* Put the case like this, dear madam. The child, helpless and unowned, is turned out to wander about the streets, and is intentionally lost; but may not some benevolent, philanthropic person, striving to do his duty to his neighbour whilst here below, have found that stray lamb, and

taking her in his arms as I do this—ah, this bottle—may he not have said——"

The moral remark of the supposed benevolent philanthropic party will not appear in print, for Caroline Armstrong, who had been listening eagerly, now sprang up. "*You* have seen my child!" she cried. *You* saw her to-day with that—that other woman, and it was not another of my mad dreams! Tell me, doctor," she continued, more quietly, "you *have* seen her? Bring her to me." Again she grew violent, as Lawrence remained silent and unmoved. "Why don't you go? You have hidden her away, or have lost her again. I believe you have stolen my child? By heavens! you grey-headed, maimed old rascal; I'll have the law of you."

She sprang towards him, but once more excitement was too much for her, and, turning pale as death, she only had strength sufficient to totter blindly to the bed, and fall back upon it again.

Lawrence, shocked into action at last, saturated his handkerchief with brandy, and bathed her face, forcing her also to swallow some of the spirit. With increased alarm, he noticed that his handkerchief, when he withdrew it from her lips, was marked with blood. Something had to be done, and quickly, unless he wished to bear the whole responsibility of the woman's dangerous condition; and, thoroughly frightened, he left the room, calling to the maid to remain with the lady whilst he went for assistance.

Near the entrance of the hotel he found Mary and Maggie — surrounded by the usual crowd of Spanish vagabonds and loafers—endeavouring to obtain news of him. He quickly told Mary all that he thought it necessary for her to know, and after sending off for the nearest doctor, he put Maggie under the care of the hotel proprietor, and returned with his eldest daughter to the sick room.

There had been but very little change since his hurried departure. Caroline Armstrong was still lying back upon the bed, and the maid, leaning over her, occasionally wiped her lips with the handkerchief.

The unfortunate woman moved restlessly as the two entered, and looked expectantly at Lawrence, but it was to Mary that she spoke first.

"Where is she?" she said, slowly, and with difficulty, but in tones as defiant as ever. "You have no right to her. I am her *mother*."

"She's coming very soon," said Mary, gently, dropping at once upon her knees at the bed side, and raising the sick woman's head until it rested against her bosom. "Do you feel prepared to see her almost immediately?"

"You talk like a child," said Caroline, peevishly. "Am I prepared, indeed! Cannot you understand that my life—my sole

pleasure for years has been excitement? For that, I have given up peace, and sold myself, body and soul!"

Mary shuddered, and signed to her father, who left the room.

"Hush, hush!" she whispered to Caroline. "Think of your child; a mother's love should give you peace. Think"—and she bent her head lower—"think of the Giver of all Peace; He will not refuse it you."

"*He* give me peace," burst forth the woman. "My child or my mother's love give me peace! Let me go, you pretty innocent." And pushing Mary roughly aside, she sprang to the floor and seized the nearly empty brandy bottle. "*Here* is my peace," she cried. "God's best gift! Peace for the murderess! Peace for the lost! Oh, don't be afraid, I'm not going to drink any more. Am I not in a fit state to welcome my daughter, eh?"

Poor Mary remained silent; she felt that anything more she might say would be

worse than useless; and Caroline, looking anxiously towards the door, became quiet also.

In a very few minutes Mr. Lawrence, leading Maggie, and followed by a Spanish doctor, entered the room.

The wretched mother stepped hastily towards her child, but shrank back again, and stood leaning against the table for support, as Maggie, with a little cry of delight, ran quickly past her to Mary. The latter stooped down, and placing both arms around the child's waist kissed her lovingly, and then turned her towards Caroline Armstrong, saying, "Look there, Maggie; who is that nice lady?"

Maggie, looking up, saw her mother, with arms now outstretched, watching her anxiously; and, twisting herself quickly round, she clung closely to Mary, who whispered to her "to go like a good girl." Slowly and reluctantly the little one left her new sister's protecting arms, and moved

towards her mother; but after a few short, uncertain steps, she stopped, and clasping her hands behind her back, repeated in her baby English, and with eyes cast down, that mother's last-taught lesson:—

"I'se a love child and she's sick of me." Then, turning quickly away, she ran back and hid herself behind Mary.

No one spoke; even Mr. Lawrence forgot to keep up his last character, and improve the occasion by administering a moral proverb; and the first sound heard was Caroline Armstrong's bitter laugh as she once more leant back heavily against the table.

"Witness, all of you," said she, "how my child loves me! how fond she is of me; and you," she cried, turning fiercely towards Mary, "do you still prate of peace and steal my daughter's love from me?" And moving quickly to the frightened Maggie, she lifted her in her arms, and sat her upon the table. "Now child, listen to me," she

continued, with her hand upon both Maggie's shoulders. "In a few years when you have grown a big girl and people ask, who was your father? you will hear the wise-acres reply, a successful lover, an honourable man, a good fellow. Who was your mother? A weak-minded, love-sick fool. A worthless woman, forsaken by God, despised by men. You will remember, child; who is she?'" But poor Maggie could no longer restrain her frightened sobs, and Mary, quiet, gentle Mary, was aroused; and snatching up the child cried, "You *must* not; you *shall* not teach her such things. It is *shameful* of you."

Caroline Armstrong stood perfectly still, her eyes glancing from one to another of them. "Shameful!" she muttered; "yes, nothing but shame for her and me. *I* am safe! there will soon be great rejoicings over me down there. But what of *her?*" She grew wilder and almost incoherent as she went on: "God's gift—a love child! Death

would be the best thing for her *too*—an early death, with her loving mother; ha, ha! and she shall have it; she shall have it!" she shrieked, as again seizing the neck of the bottle, she brandished it wildly over her head and darted forward. But once more her strength failed her, excitement overpowered her, and she fell on the floor at her daughter's feet.

The two men raised her, as Mary carried the now shrieking child quickly away—and she seemed anxious to speak again, but the life blood choked her utterance, a last bitter laugh forced its way up as her eyes were turned triumphantly towards Lawrence; and even as they turned and their glance kindled, her triumph was achieved. She had succeeded—ending her fast life as she had wished.

Nothing was known about her people out there, and Lawrence, without much difficulty, constituted himself her uncle; the landlord knowing that she had come from

the bull fight with him, and also being only too glad to be saved all personal bother. Sending the two girls back to Gibraltar, Lawrence slept that night at the hotel, and on the following day Caroline Armstrong was buried.

"It will be a heavy pull upon us," Mr. Lawrence had said to his eldest daughter; "her jewellery and dresses are of very little value, but we must stint ourselves in order to afford a decent resting-place to our erring sister."

This was very nice; and Mary, pleased to find her father so unselfish and thoughtful, *did* stint herself. In consequence of which, and of sundry visits to a shop close around the corner, there was a marked increase in that unselfish and thoughtful man's pocket-money, after the dead woman's property had been sold and her funeral expenses paid. By this unexpected occurrence they were detained in Gibraltar for another week; then, after a few days on board the

steamer, they landed at Southampton, went to London immediately, and as Mary thought, with much unnecessary secrecy, and settled in lodgings over a small shop in St. Martin's Lane.

CHAPTER III.

NOW for Westfield Vicarage, the residence of the Rev. John Ormby, uncle of Violet and Dicky. I have not spoken of him before as the *Reverend*, in fact most people were apt to forget that he was a clergyman. He had taken but little duty since the living had come to him on the death of his father, and before becoming a vicar, much of his time had been spent abroad. He was in Barbadoes when the news of his father's death reached him; staying with his brother who was manager of one of the large sugar plantations there; and they were on their way home together, Richard's three children being also with them, when their vessel was wrecked at the entrance of the English Channel, and Richard

Ormby and his eldest daughter, Mary, were amongst the missing. The living of Westfield was worth about six hundred a year, and the vicar had lately sold the advowson to Mr. Monkton, who owned the greater part of the surrounding country. The working man of the parish was the curate. "A curate!" as Tinsel says to Rochdale in Sheridan Knowle's old English play, "The Hunchback:"

> A curate! Better be a Yeoman's son!
> * * * * * *
> The curate ever hath a loaded back,
> He may be called the Yeoman of the church;
> That sweating does his work and drudges on
> While lives the hopeful rector at his ease."

Christmas is drawing near now. Dicky belongs to the *Duke of Wellington*, flagship at Portsmouth, and is at home on a fortnight's leave; the captain of the *Duke* —sensible man—considering that it is better to give plenty of leave to the youngsters who are sent to his ship to await their next sea-going appointment, than to keep them in a town like Portsmouth, to loosen their

morals, lose their health and coin, and untie the last string of their mothers' aprons.

Snow has been falling for several days, and we slip and flounder down the narrow hill pathway, at the bottom of which is one entrance to the Vicarage grounds.

"Get in there, Pincher! hie in, stupid!" sounds a clear, girlish voice, from a little farther down the valley; then, "Good dog, good old Pinch," as the report of a gun, and the squeal of a rabbit follow each other rapidly. We turn a sharp corner, taking care first to give tongue, and so run no risk of sharing the fate of "the pretty little rabbits, so engaging in their habits," and in another five minutes we have relieved Vi Ormby of the bag, and offered to carry the young tree she has been beating with.

"Come along, Dicky," she cries, as her brother and Armstrong tramp towards us from the other end of the young plantation. "One dozen, exactly," she continued, to

Armstrong, "and as Dicky has shot two more than you have, you lose two pair of gloves—sixes, straw colour, nine buttons, would be most acceptable; not much of a reward to ask, is it?" she demands, turning to "us," and then looking down at her slushy, heavy boots, and torn skirts. We express our concurrence, and are commencing one of the very neatest of a neat assortment of compliments, when she cuts us short with, "Now, I vote for luncheon. I dare say Cecil and Mr. Daintree will have come round by this time; and I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"As a beater, you mean," said Dicky; and we all trudge on in single file, Vi handing her stick to Jack Armstrong to carry. The latter is staying at the Vicarage. Old Court, the place he has lately bought, is under repair, and its owner has been spending the greater part of the last few months at Mr. Ormby's; with what result was determined no later than yesterday, when

Vi promised that she would, *perhaps*, *some* day, allow him to make her mistress of one of the nicest houses in that part of the county.

Mrs. Monkton, Violet's great female friend and adviser, had, for reasons best known to herself, done all she could to forward the match; Mr. Ormby considering that, if Vi must get married, and had not Mrs. Monkton assured him that she *must*, she would still live near the Vicarage, was well contented to promise her to such an energetic, agreeable man as Mr. Armstrong appeared to be. Lastly, Vi herself, merry, affectionate little Vi, proud of her early engagement, and quite decided in her own mind that it should be a jolly long one, scarcely realized yet what she had promised; and looked upon Armstrong as a good fellow, whom she might marry some day, and who, if she did, would let her enjoy life pretty much in her own way, in the old county, and close to her old chums, her brother Dicky, and

Cecil Monkton. Of these two latter, up to the present time, Dicky had laughed at the whole business—the idea of Vi, married, was *too* absurd; and Monkton knew nothing about yesterday's business, however much he may have "had his suspicions."

Sliding and laughing, slipping and joking, we come at length nearly to the bottom of the hill, and strike into a good broad road, close to one of the gates of the Vicarage. A good, honest old five-barred gate it is, too, with a solid pair of hinges, which the extra work and weight constantly given them by Vi and Dicky, have been powerless to wear out.

We pass through, and wait for a few minutes, whilst the gallant naval officer and the engaged young lady persuade the too agreeable Armstrong to accompany them in that rustic, invigorating exercise, "swinging on a gate."

The drive to the house curves slightly to the right, away through the glebe land, on

which are grazing some few of the live stock of the vicar's home farm; and the house itself is now well in view, long, low, and compact, as far as the main part of the building goes, but with many irregular additions and outhouses, more straggling and more numerous as they near the farm at the back. Away on the left, almost hidden by an ivy-covered wall, is the kitchen garden, in which, as old Alick will tell you, is the best soil in Sussex; and beyond again, is the meadow, where Vi and Dicky have played many a hard fought single-wicket match, and where we can just see, between those two old oak trees, from one of which hangs a well worn swing, Vi's archery ground and target-stands, and, nearer the house, the lawn tennis court.

Hunger having triumphed over the attractions of the gate, we move on again. About halfway along the drive, a footpath branches off up the hill to the right, a short cut leading you through a small

"kissing gate" at the end of the glebe, and so on, past the National School, with its usual sprinkling of mud-pie makers, and into the village street, and the parish church, a narrow, much-beaten track, not encroaching too much upon the vicar's grass. Down a steep incline, which commences at about fifty yards from the front door of the vicarage, is another entrance gate, and close to it, looking sadly bare now, is the Lime Walk. Over that low, thick-set hedge on the right, we can catch a glimpse of Vi's fowl-house and aviary, built at the entrance to the Lover's Walk, of which walk *we*, rightly enough, can see nothing from here, and which Vi and Dicky have never frequented much, unless we take into consideration the necessary visits of the young lady to her rabbits, and broken-legged pets of all kinds, and of the young gentleman to his ferrets and tame jackdaw, all residing in or about the summer-house, stretching across its far end.

As we arrive at the porch, the gate near the Lime Walk is thrown open, and Monkton, with Daintree by his side, drives swiftly up the incline in his dog-cart.

The vicar's man, gardener, groom, and general out-of-door servant—in fact, *emphatically*, "the vicar's man"—leaves the "cowcumber frame" around the corner, and, touching his cap to "Master Cecil," leads the horse off to the stables.

Cecil has driven over from his father's place, "Tremlett," where, for the last fortnight, Daintree has been staying with him.

They all entered the house, and hat-pegs were quickly decorated. Pincher would fain have entered also, but after enjoying the pleasures of the chase, the muddy line was drawn at the doorstep, and beyond that he dared not venture. He, of course, went through the form of tugging beseechingly at Vi's petticoats, and wistfully wagging his stump of a tail,

but his canine appeals proving of no effect, he dragged a thorn out of his tail upon the doorstep, and trotted after old Alick to the yard.

The Vicarage hall is large, square, and old-fashioned, with several curiosities collected by former Vicars adorning the walls, and amongst them cases of stuffed birds, set up by the present occupant during his early travels, cases which ran many risks of utter destruction, at such times as Vi, Dicky, and fiends of like calibre were driven by wet weather to battledore and shuttlecock.

The drawing and dining-rooms are both on the ground-floor, and to the door of the latter Vi ran at once. Inside the room was Mr. Ormby, slumbering peacefully. Luncheon was already spread, and Vi, stating her determination to fall to with as little delay as possible, made the men sit down, and proceeded to awaken her uncle.

Approaching him on tiptoe, she removed the newspaper from his knees—they got the previous day's paper at eleven o'clock every forenoon at Westfield—and administered several vigorous kisses to the old man's forehead.

"You distressingly naughty man; you have been reading small print again," she said, gaily, taking his arm as he looked helplessly around. "How often must I tell my mutinous old darling that *I* must do all the reading?"

"It was only the leading articles, Vi; I can almost read them without my glasses, you know. I think, Vi, that I must have been nearly asleep when you came in." And Mr. Ormby, feeling for his spectacles, of which, he discovered two pairs well on the top of his head, brought one of them down to a working position, nodded to his young friends, and was soon being helped to every available tit-bit by his niece.

"It gives me the very greatest pleasure to see you all," he said, as soon as Vi had arranged him to her satisfaction; "and I think it very kind of you to come and see an old fellow like I am."

Most of the listeners looked guilty; they had scarcely come to visit *him*. Vi laughed.

"Only hear him," she said; "and the conceited old dear knows all the time that we would go *miles* to see him."

"So we would, of course we would," chorused the guilty ones.

"Ah! that reminds me of old times," said Mr. Ormby, slowly, looking well pleased. "Why, when I was a midshipman in the old *Rollo* brig, who was more liked than John Ormby? Honest John they used to call me. Honest John. Ah! well I remember being sent to the masthead one evening to look out for land, which was at least a couple of hundred miles distant, and I, when I got up there,

I felt quite blown, and—and it was about six o'clock in the evening, and—you remember, Vi. Why don't you tell them? I seemed to see it all just now," muttered the old man, sadly; adding, in another moment, "a little of the soft pudding, please, Vi," and evidently forgetting all about the mast-heading, which had been merely one of his many fancies.

Vi looked mournfully at Dicky, and her uncle laid his hand affectionately on her shoulder. "How they will all flock to 'Old Court' some day, eh, Miss Vi?" said he. "But you shan't keep far away from the Vicarage for long at a time," he added, with all an old man's suspicion, as he turned to Armstrong, who was *trying*—Monkton is my authority for using the word "trying"—to put on the proper "conscious" look.

It was Vi's turn to look guilty now. Daintree glanced quickly across the table at Cecil; but, as the latter was staring in astonishment at Armstrong, and was ap-

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parently in no hurry to speak, he stifled a "whew," and hastened to break the silence before it became awkward.

"Ah, Vi! Vi!" he exclaimed in his most dismal accents. "Tell me, is *this* to be my reward, after long years of sailorly devotion? Was it for *this* that I sold my farm and went to sea? Was it for *this* that I have spent the best years of my life amongst the masked women of Turkey, Persia, and Arabia, and—worse still; cruellest task of all!—their *un*masked, black, bronze, and copper-coloured sisters? Was it for *this?* But enough! Words fail me; and I will merely remark that apparently it *was* for this."

Cecil looked impatiently at the seemingly distracted Daintree, but managed to join in the laugh around him, and the late flag-lieutenant continued with increased despondency, and in imploring accents: "But when on the festive bridal tour, when on the joyous honeymoon, all I ask *is*, that in

your most mirthful, your *merriest* moments, you will pause to heave a sigh, and drop a tear to unrequited affection as embodied in the person of your sorely-crushed Francis," and he buried his head in his hands with a sepulchral groan, having succeeded in his effort, and raised a general laugh.

Cecil joined in gaily with the rest, and then congratulated Vi in his own thorough, *seamanlike* manner.

After luncheon was over, and they were once more in the hall, he went up to Dicky. "Nipper, old fellow," said he to the youngster; "we are not to be shipmates again, just yet. It seems a shame," he continued, turning to Vi, "to bring bad news in the midst of all your happiness; that is, if you consider it *bad*," he corrected himself, rather bitterly. "Daintree and I were appointed to the *Tigris* this morning."

"What? an Indian trooper! Oh lor!" exclaimed the Nipper.

"How horrid of them to appoint you so

quickly! *Of course* it's bad news," said Vi, with great disgust. "Why, you have not been home more than three months!"

"This is rather a special case," said Cecil, drily. "Their first lieutenant was promoted, and one of the other lieutenants died during their last passage to Portsmouth, so there were two vacancies; and as when Daintree and I were last in town—just before he came down here—we went to the Admiralty, and asked to get the same ship if possible, we were appointed to the old *Tigris* at once. I don't think that either of us quite bargained for the trooping business, though. Did we, old fellow?"

"Not *quite*," said Daintree, dismally. "A steaming family warehouse and storeship for removing damaged goods to India! Pickford's van's a fool to it. *They* only take the 'goods.' *We* have the families attached. The 'bads' one might call them."

"How very distressing?" laughed Vi. "But there will be a chance of some fair

one responding to your sailorly devotion, even though it will only have lasted for the passage instead of for 'long years.' "

"By Jove, I hope she won't!" said Daintree, quickly. "That is, I know you feel that I am undeserving of any such good fortune. The only *point* that I can see about the business is that Mrs. Faulkner—Miss Maggie Dutton that was, you know—is going out in her."

"I don't quite understand how that will affect you," said Vi, demurely.

"Oh, no! I agree with you intensely. As *you say*, a bride is not much sport as a rule—not that one may occasionally meet a frisky, young——. But it was not of *her* that I was thinking. I heard from old Sir Robert this morning. He had just met Major Faulkner at the 'Junior,' and heard from him that Captain Braddon, of the *Tigris*, had offered to give Mrs. Faulkner's *sister* a passage out to Bombay, if she would like to make the trip. When she got there,

she might either stay in India with the Faulkner's—who only have one year to stop out—or she might easily come home again in the ship under the wing of some returning Dowager."

"A most charming arrangement, I *must* say," laughed Vi. "How fortunate it is that the Indian troopships carry chaplains. I'll bet you a dozen gloves to a dozen Bombay bangles, that you will be, at any rate, *engaged* to Blanche before you reach India."

"Done along wi' you, Miss," said Daintree. "And now as that irrepressible sportsman—the Nipper—has gone off with his gun, will you let me assist you in knocking Monkton and Armstrong's heads off at lawn tennis."

"But I said I would never play with you again; you are so rude, and you won't pick the balls up!"

"Ah! But you didn't mean *that*, you know," said Daintree with strong conviction.

"You *couldn't* mean such shocking cruelty. Besides, if you like, I'll do *nothing* all the time but pick the balls up."

"You had better try it on, sir!" said Vi, shaking her bat at him, and leading the way to the court which, for winter play, had been marked on the asphalte at one side of the house.

"Come along, Monkton," said Armstrong; "we must take the conceit out of them. Lawn tennis in the winter, say I!"

"Hear! Hear!" exclaimed Cecil. "The nuisance of it is that the afternoons are so short that one can't get enough of the game; and I'm afraid it becomes a little too evident sometimes that gravel is harder than grass. You serve first, Vi."

They played on until the near approach of dusk drove them indoors, warm and ready for the "full and fragrant cup of tea."

"I must say good-bye to you for a time, Cecil," said Daintree, after they were comfortably seated round the drawing-room

fire, Vi presiding at a small tea table on the hearth-rug. "My lady mother will expect a visit before the *Tigris* sails."

"What's to-day?—Friday. All right; you can go to town to-morrow, and spend the remaining time with Lady Fernleigh. We had better join next Thursday."

"But you will both stay to dinner this evening, won't you?" said Vi. Daintree glanced towards Cecil, leaving it to him to decide, and Vi continued; "I especially want you to meet Miss Lowder, that curious old lady who has taken the Willow Cottage. She has come from one of the midland counties, and, like a good many other midlanders, has never met a naval officer, and has a most vague idea of things sea-going. It would be great fun drawing the old lady—just the tiniest bit, wouldn't it, Cecil?"

But, somehow, Cecil did not care about it. "I'm afraid the Nipper will have to represent the Navy, and do all the 'drawing,'" he said. "We promised the mater to be

back at 7.30 at the latest. She has a small dinner on." Daintree laughed softly to himself as Monkton spoke; it had seemed improbable to him that they would stay to dinner at the Vicarage; but it was strange that this was the first he had heard of the 7.30 arrangement.

"Oh! Hang your mother's dinner party," cried the Nipper. "I don't mean to be rude, Cecil," he added, apologetically; "but we might have had such glorious fun with Miss Lowder."

"And I *insist* upon being rude," said Vi, "and I, *too*, say, 'Hang Mrs. Monkton's dinner party!' It's too horrid, your going away. You shan't escape Miss Lowder altogether, though, for I told her to come before dark, as the roads are so bad, and we would put her up for the night, or several nights, if she would stop; so she may turn up at any minute. Hush!" she continued, theatrically, as a ring at the front-door bell was heard. "Hush! She comes."

"Enter maiden lady of uncertain age," murmured Daintree. "Fearfully and wonderfully attired in mediæval gown and poke bonnet."

"Hush! 'Tis she," again stage-whispered Vi, as the door opened, and she rose to receive her visitor.

"Just in time for a cup of tea," she said, gaily. "Let me introduce Mr. Daintree and Mr. Monkton—Miss Lowder. You know the others, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, me dear! I met Mr. Armstrong with ye, yesterday, ye know." And the old lady gave a meaning smile. "And, *dear* me; there's Master Richard, too, the middy."

Dicky looked far, far from gay at being called "Master Richard," and positively *grinned* with confusion as the maiden insisted upon kissing the "dear boy."

"And so you two young gentlemen are sailor officers," she said, after everyone was once more seated. "And how do you like

the sea, sir? I suppose you are only on shore for a few days?"

"Say a few *hours*, my dear madam," replied Daintree, promptly, determined to have *some* fun before Cecil dragged him away. "We count our leave by *hours*. Freezing in England to-day. Sail for sunny Africa or spicy Arabia to-morrow. That's our style. Out of the ice, into the water; and *yet* we are alive. Curious, dear madam, isn't it? Allow me to offer you a biscuit."

"Dear me! dear me!" ejaculated Miss Lowder, accepting a biscuit and another cup of tea. "And to think that you are the first sailor officers I have met. But then, to be sure, you would very rarely find time to travel so far away from the sea as Warwickshire, where I come from."

"Warwickshire!" exclaimed Daintree, in amazed tones, and quite ignoring Vi's appealing look. "Why we should be *lost*,

utterly lost, so far away from our guns, rams, torpedoes, and cat-o'-nine-tails. No, madam, a grateful island requires us to sacrifice our lives, if need be, in defending her surrounding waters; and shall we waste our time, expend our substance, and the British tax-payers' money in *Warwickshire?* No! Shipwreck, sink, and perish the thought!" and the late flag-lieutenant winked the eye farthest removed from Miss Lowder.

That elderly spinster looked rather bewildered at the "sailor officer's" vehemence, but, probably, would not have been really *very* much surprised had he commenced hauling on imaginary ropes, and "yo-hoing" about the room, or dancing a hornpipe on the table, these things being, as she was well assured, the staple amusements of the sailor man.

"*Dear* me!" she ejaculated once more. "How very thoughtful and considerate of you. Such a young man, too."

"Young in years, but old in — in wisdom," said Daintree, quite loud enough to drown the malicious word with which Vi had attempted to finish his sentence.

"Very true, sir," resumed the spinster, musingly. "And how *much* you must see of foreign lands. But don't you get very tired of pulling the ropes and putting up the sails all day?"

Dicky here endeavoured to explain that those light gymnastics were not indulged in by the officers; but, after listening to him incredulously, she called him a "naughty boy," and patted his head, as, with a knowing smile, she told him not to try and deceive an old woman. "And then those dear Jack tars," she exclaimed, turning to Daintree, as the only person from whom to obtain reliable information; "I've seen one or two of them when they had been what they called 'paid off.' Now, what is that, Captain *Dainty*?"

"*Daintree*, madam; Daintree," said the

lieutenant, as the others laughed slyly at him, for the Hon. Francis was very particular about his name. "Paid off, had they been? Poor fellows," he continued. "It is a painful subject, Miss Lowder; after many weary years of incessant toil at sea, we have a grand day of reckoning for all who have committed offences, and the unfortunate fellows are all paid off together. You have heard of the cat-o'-nine-tails, Miss Lowder? Ah! Who has not? Well, the number of lashes has been reduced lately to four-hundred-and-thirty-two; but it used to be——"

"*Four hundred and thirty-two* lashes with that fearful cat! Oh! how monstrous," interrupted the old lady.

"Are you certain that that was the exact number, Mr. Daintree?" asked Vi; and to her he gently murmured, "Four dozen with nine tails, each tail being a lash; and what does that come to? *Four hun-*

dred and thirty-two, or four bag, as Jack familiarly has it."

Vi, who alone heard his calculation, smiled, but Cecil also interrupted now, thinking it high time for the romancing Daintree to be drawn off.

"Come along, old fellow," said he; "we must be moving. Remember you have to say good-bye for several months. Good-bye, Mr. Ormby."

But his Reverence had fallen asleep.

"Good-bye, Captain Monkton. God guard ye in your perilous life," said the old lady, fervently, as Cecil shook her hand.

"Neither of us are captains yet, I'm sorry to say, Miss Lowedr, and very likely never will be," he replied.

"Oh, I thought you were sure to be captains. All the army officers are captains."

Daintree sighed, and muttered, "Militia —3rd battalion—*ours*, you know."

"No doubt, and all the Volunteer officers too," said Cecil, laughing. "But a captain in the royal navy is scarcely the same as a captain in the army, Miss Lowder. With us, captain is the rank next before admiral. Daintree and myself are naval lieutenants."

"Ah, well; I don't understand much about it, I suppose. I'm an *old* woman. Good-bye, lieutenant—God bless you, my dear." And Cecil, followed by Vi and Dicky, left the room.

Daintree lingered behind. He saw a chance of improving the occasion; and stepping before Miss Lowder, he inquired if she had ever heard of an admiral.

Miss Lowder nodded. She thought that perhaps she *had* heard of those exalted marine monsters.

"Well, if you would like to hear it," said Daintree, with his usual amount of diffidence, "I once made a little poem about admirals. It runs like this:—

"Prethent armth," the guard!
Thound the "Admiralth Welcome," bugler!
Pipe, boathwain, long and hard!
"Toe a line" for the great thea ruler!
"Thilence, fore and aft"!
Thiver timber, neat and handy!
"Cellth" for that man who laugh'd!
Dared to laugh at the ocean dandy!
An adm'ral, I dethended from
The brave thea knight of old;
Inheriting their much "pom-pom!"
Theeking more thtripes of gold.
When on the quarter deck I thtand,
How regal my thenthations;
Arm'd "hearth of ore" *grow* on each hand—
Each *bearth* the "fate of nations."
"Prethent arms," the guard! &c.
And thtill I feel when down below,
My "thtaff" clothe at my thide;
I feel, ath briny breezeth blow,
Tha'vry thalt-theasoned pride.
But whether *pride* or whether *thide*,
The *weather thide'th* my billet,
And so—viceroy of wind and tide—
I thwell and puff to fill it.
"Prethent armth," the guard! &c.
A model father alwayth—that
Ith, ath regardth my crew.
I find "tant *pis*" I uthe the "cat."
I make them "tant *mieux*."
One thon I have and daughters three;
Ath middy he'll enlitht,
A huthbandth *prop* each *mith* thall be,
Or my "*thtaff*" will be *dithmith'd*.
"Prethent armth," the guard! &c.
Ambitiouth I, ath men of mind
When young, they thay, should be;
"Maththeaded" oft—'twath mine to find
How beth to top the tree.
But when grown old, and at the truck,
Death "making thail" and "clothing,"
Pleathe God, and "Jackth'" proverbial luck,
I'll take my "orders"—floating.
"Presenth armth," the guard! &c.

"Yes. I suppose it's very nice," said his hearer, who didn't quite understand what it was all about, and was inclined to be cross in consequence. "Very nice, I dare say; but I'm getting an old woman now, and more stupid, and—"

"Not at all! not at all!" broke in Daintree; "couldn't be stupider—I mean, couldn't be *younger*, I'm certain." And, nodding to Armstrong, who was left alone to entertain the now rather high-horsed old lady, he hurried off.

In the meantime, Vi and Dicky had been coating Cecil in the hall.

"Stoop down, you monster, do;" commanded Miss Ormby. "You won't have anyone to help on your great coat in Bombay." This rather softly.

"Ha! ha!" burst forth the Nipper. "What sort of great coats do they wear in Bombay? You muff, Vi."

"Oh! you are awfully clever! you never make mistakes;" retorted Vi, as

her brother went to give Daintree a lift. "Cecil," she continued, in a low voice, "were you not awfully surprised to hear of my engagement?"

"Yes," said Monkton, dryly; "*awfully.*"

"Ah! I knew I should astonish you," she said, triumphantly. "It's a very good thing; don't you think so? You see I shall be near you and Dicky, and Jack Armstrong seems a very decent fellow, and it will be like having another brother, you know." She glanced up quickly, expecting an emphatic "of course" from Cecil.

He, however, was looking down at her, thoughtfully. "Good-bye, Vi," he said; "take my name off the list, please. Husbands don't care for adopted brothers-in-law, and remember, little woman—you won't be angry at what I'm going to say?"

"Fancy his asking *me* not to be angry!" thought Vi; "that's because I'm *engaged.*" And then she smiled, and Cecil continued:

"I only want to remind you of what Tom Hood says in 'Miss Kilmansegg and her precious leg."

> Alas for the love that's link'd with gold;
> Better—better a thousand times told—
> More honest, happy, and laudable,
> The downright loving of pretty Cis
> Who wipes her lips, though there's nothing amiss,
> And takes a kiss, and gives a kiss,
> In which her heart is audible.

"There, don't be angry! Come along Daintree; we musn't keep the mare waiting. Good-bye for a day or two, Vi."

Old Alick received his customary tip, and the dog-cart was soon spinning along the road to Tremlett.

"I don't think Cecil's quite up to the knocker," remarked the Nipper, as he and Vi waited to see the last of the dog-cart. "And I believe he's worrying himself about not having heard from Mary Lawrence for so long. He'll be getting spoony on her, if he isn't so already, which I jolly well believe he is." With which sage observation, Dicky shut the front door.

"I never used to think of Cecil getting

spoony," said Vi, as they recrossed the hall.

"Never *used* to," echoed Dicky. "When did you alter your opinion, then?" But his sister had entered the dining-room, and now shut the door in his face; which would have been rude in a love-sick swain; how much more so in an engaged young lady?

Vi went to bed early that night, and rather astonished Dicky, by whispering as she kissed him: "Isn't it strange to think of Jack Armstrong as my husband, and your brother, eh! dear old boy?" When Dicky came to look at it in that light it *did* seem strange. He hadn't got beyond the hunting and shooting and yachting view of the case before.

The next morning, Daintree left Tremlett to visit his mother, and, early on Sunday, Armstrong received a telegram, calling him to London immediately.

CHAPTER IV.

ARMSTRONG has somehow been rather in the background lately, so we will be after him to London; wondering what news can have called him up. It is easy to guess at one pressing reason which would make him flee Westfield to-day, as from the cholera—the fact of its being Sunday. To be tied up there, with the vicar dozing after his early dinner, Dicky sitting out near the stables yarning with old Alick, and Vi at the Sunday school repeating texts and expounding the Scriptures to the village infants, was not to be endured, if the cure was by any means attainable.

He had managed to escape every Sunday during his stay; as well as an occasional

unpromising week-day; a telegram supplying him with an excuse each time, and each time calling him to the same direction.

He was even better and more carefully dressed than usual, as he jumped out of a smoking carriage at the Charing Cross railway station at about 11 A.M. Continuing to smoke, he strolled leisurely out of the big gates, crossed the road, and keeping away to the left, entered Trafalgar Square. A few members of St. Martin-in-the-Fields' congregation were hurrying past the National Gallery, and up the steps of their fine old church, as he walked carelessly by. They (the hurrying worshippers), a decrepit vendor of the *Matrimonial Gazette*, who—from a mistaken habit of assuring pedestrians that he had obtained a wife through its columns—had hitherto failed to dispose of a single copy, and our sailor hero perched upon his "sky scraper" monument, were almost the only noticeable figures, as he kept along on the right side

of the road, and entered St. Martin's Lane. Here was life and plenty of it, and he soon had to take to the road and wind his way carefully through the crowd of Sunday street hawkers, who were ready, nay *anxious*, to supply him or "any other gent," with a bird of *any* colour or a dog of *any* breed, at the shortest notice.

The bells of old St. Martin's were never noticed; the dry tones of the learned vicar, the eager pleadings of the most eloquent of curates were never heard by them; but they could paint the common, or garden, or house sparrow, canary colour; or pick you up as "purty a leetle fox-tarrier dorg" as you'd wish to see. What more would you have? Moral tone! Then go and look for it amongst the natives of Sierra Leone, Jellah Coffee, etc., who get it straight from the missionaries, accompanied by clothing for converted blacks and other perquisites, which appertain to it in *those parts*. *We* have to do with enlightened London.

Assuring the various fanciers that he was not in any immediate want of either a "dorg as 'ud fight like a badger" or "a parrot as 'ud talk like a 'uman," Armstrong walked quickly on to the end of the street, where the shops were better and the pavement less crowded, and stopped before number 120, "I. Meshach, bird fancier, etc."

The man of airy fancies was himself lolling out of an upper window of the premises, as Armstrong approached and rang the bell. He disappeared then, and made a remark to some other occupant of the room, which was answered by a surly order to shut the window and open the door and be blowed to him; and not to make remarks about gentlemen and Christians.

Mumbling a short sentence in which reference was made to "the shosen peoplesh" and donning a long alpaca coat and velvet smoking cap, Mr. Meshach descended and opened the front door. "Valk in

Captainsh," he mumbled—he *always* mumbled. "Your frient vash expeck you, ant he'sh none so pleasant ven he expecksh."

"All right, Meshach, you old nugget. Bring up the requisites," and slipping a sovereign into the Hebrew's ever-clutching palm, he marched on upstairs and entered the room which Meshach had left. There he found Mr. Jim Lawrence lazily lounging close over the fire. A thaw had set in on Friday night, and the weather was mild, but Mr. Lawrence was fond of getting his money worth, and coals were expensive, and paid for by the week.

"Hulloh! my Sunday bird;" was his greeting, as Armstrong, followed by Meshach with the requisites, came in. "How goes it?" Armstrong laughed, and took a seat near the fire.

Mr. Meshach fussed about the room for a few minutes, but as neither of the men appeared likely to say anything worth

hearing whilst he was with them, he supposed he "vash best go and see vash missee better."

"Why, is she ill?" inquired Armstrong, looking anxiously at Lawrence. That pattern father grinned maliciously.

"Oh, don't be alarmed, my flower," said he. "It's only the little 'un," adding, with a choice oath to Meshach, that he didn't care whether he went to the missee or to the devil, so long as he cleared out of there pretty sharp.

Armstrong took the Jew by the shoulders, persuasively, and telling him to send his daughter or the slavey to Miss Lawrence, pushed him politely out of the room, then, lighting another cigar, he sat down again and proceeded to at once open his business. "Well!" said he, "things have gone on even better than I anticipated. Do you hear me?"

Lawrence, without removing his pipe from his mouth, growled out, "I hear

you. You're quite interesting as far as you've got."

"I wish you could contrive to *show* a little interest then; you look half asleep!"

"Never you mind how I look, captain; we can't all be swells, and go about in spats and a button-hole." He spoke gruffly, and took a long pull at his whisky-and-water.

"Don't get vicious, Mr. Lawrence," said his visitor, smiling good-humouredly. "As I was saying, things have gone on well, and we have already paid off our old score. By Gad, how we can make use of women. I have sold our friend, Cecil Monkton, properly, and Miss Ormby and I are *engaged*. What do you say to that?"

"*Good*, I say! Bully for you, my Tulip. *Engaged* are you? Ha! ha! I s'pose *when* the marriage comes off you'll be wanting me for best man, eh? But what does *he* say to it?"

"Not much; he can't say much. He *feels* it though, curse him."

"Of course he does, and we're winning, by the Lord Harry! We're paying our debts. Degraded, am I? and stupid with drink, am I? That's what *he* said! Blest if the old drunkard don't help to score this time."

"And we'll score more yet, Mr. Lawrence," said Jack Armstrong, encouragingly, nodding familiarly to him, and taking a pull at the mixture.

"Now, about that other business!" he continued, eagerly, and with lowered voice. "What does Mary say? Does she believe the reasons you gave for not letting her write to Monkton before? Does she—do you think that she cares for me?"

The man was thoroughly in earnest now. "If I could only get her to marry me!" he went on. "Do you still think that if I am the means of restoring her to her family, she would like me more; that she could

possibly—love me?" His lowered voice dwelt tremblingly on the last words.

"Arrange your own plans, my tulip," replied Lawrence, with the greatest nonchalance; "I have promised to *assist* you, for a slight pecuniary consideration; please remember, *assist*."

"I'll double it if you will help me *arrange* matters," said Armstrong, impetuously.

Mr. Jim's eyes glistened, but he had lived long, and was eminently cautious.

"No, no, captain," said he; "no responsibility. I am not sordid, thank God," and the fellow chuckled over his profanity with great gusto, and continued piously, "If I am the humble instrument, under a gracious providence, and with the assistance of a judicious lie or two, in providing a charming girl with a loving family, well and good; but I'll be paid for lying, not for *inventing*."

"As you like," said Armstrong; "but

you might oblige me with your opinion upon just one point. Do you believe that if, as we propose—well, well—as *I propose*, Mary is received as Vi Ormby's lost sister, she would agree to marry me after I had broken off my engagement—quietly, you know—with Vi?"

"If she loves you, she'll do *anything*. I should think it's scarcely necessary to tell a man of the world *that*," sneered Mr. Lawrence, thinking on, as Mr. Armstrong remained silent. "You young fool; you will be sold too, will you? She don't love you, and never will to my thinking. However, I'll prove anything that brings in the dollars; and as long as you're spooney on her, there'll be plenty of them, and deuced little of common sense, where *she's* concerned; don't I know it well?—don't we all know it—except just whilst the fit lasts! Your infernal spite against that cursed high-and-mighty Monkton has made you get engaged to a girl you don't care for

—I believe I *did* propose that little scheme—"

Here the old man's thoughts found vent in a low chuckle, but did not disturb Armstrong, and he wandered off again, after replenishing his glass:—

"Well, you intend to get off your engagement eventually, and then having given Mary a good position—*I'm* not good enough to be your father-in-law; eh, my swell?—as the late Mr. Richard Ormby's daughter, and his reverence's niece, you will marry her instead of her sister! Ah! Will you? Miss Mary didn't seem so very grieved—the ungrateful hussy!—when I told her that she was no daughter of mine; that I picked her up at sea, lashed to a grating, and that, until the last day or two, I had believed that her mother was a mermaid, as no one had owned her. If this young fool wants a wife, who, at any rate, owns a proper name, it certainly seems easy enough to prove that she is old Ormby's niece; a

pretty story about the marking of her baby linen when found, will do that—ha! ha!—but how the devil he can expect her to get spooney on him, especially after his intended breaking-off with her sister, beats me. Gratitude will scarcely run to that, I know it don't run to much, at the best of times, in *my* experience." And Mr. Lawrence glanced contemptuously across the hearth-rug at Armstrong, who was still deep in thought.

The younger man's thoughts may also be put on paper, and were something after this style: "I have effectually sold that cursed interfering brute Monkton, even if I do have a job, at some future time, to escape my present engagement. He can have my *fiancée* after I've cast her off if he likes; I wouldn't marry the little wild devil for any money. Then there's Mary! Thank God, it was too dark that night at Gib for her to recognise me again here. Who'd have thought then that I should be such a

fool—for I suppose I *am* a fool about it—as to want to actually marry her! She *must* get to love me soon as I do her." A long, delicious sigh escaped him, and disturbed his thoughts for a minute, but they soon held him again; "Why should I marry a girl who is supposed to be this old villain's daughter, when, by a decent outlay of coin, I can prove her to be old Ormby's lost niece? It's a chance that may never occur again, of getting *my future wife* a position; and, as for the idea of her not marrying me because I have been engaged to her newly-found sister, why, as the old scoundrel there says himself; if she loves me, she'll do *anything — anything*," he repeated aloud and resolutely; "and she *shall* love me, by Gad, she shall."

"Right you are, my Tulip! Go for her at once; she's not far off; and I hope you'll be as successful with her as you were with the late Mrs. A. of San

Roque. Ugly business that, captain." And Lawrence grinned maliciously.

"Curse you, be quiet!" exclaimed Armstrong, fiercely; "you are paid for your silence, and for keeping her child. But, if you dare to worry me, or attempt any of your witticisms about it"—and he moved close over to Lawrence, and continued, threateningly—"I'll risk the chance of people hearing the *ugly story*, as you call it. After all, what can you prove? *Nothing*. Where are your witnesses? You have none. You only have your *ugly story*, and, as I agree with you that it would be better to keep that dark, I pay you handsomely. But, remember, no joking, no chaff on that subject. It is enough for me"—and he moved away, and commenced restlessly pacing the floor—"it is enough for me, that whenever I wish to see the woman I really love, I always find that *other* woman's child staring at me in her inquisitive, know-all sort of a way, as if to ask, 'What is

your little game now, my worthy papa?' That's *enough* for me, so be careful, my friend!" He stopped his pacing at the table, and drank a strong glass of grog preparatory to facing the woman he loved and the child he hated.

They were in the next room, a small apartment, generally occupied by the Meshach family, but which had been given up to Mary and Maggie for the day, as Mr. Lawrence knew that Armstrong would want a private interview, and also because the child was seedy—an unpardonable offence in the eyes of its adopted father.

The little one, looking slightly flushed and sleepy, was seated on Mary's lap, being cuddled lovingly, and they were just finishing a Sunday talk about the golden image of King Nebuchadnezzar, always a favourite story with Maggie, on account of one of the characters being, as she persistently believed, *their* Mr. Meshach's papa.

"But, couldn't one of zose grown-up

ladies and gent'men play the *piano*, mammy?" she asked.

"There were no pianos in those days, dear; they played on all the other instruments I told you of instead."

"How dreffer hot poor Mr. Meshach's papa must have been in the fire-place! Poor old Mr. Meshach!"

"Oh, no, dear! I told you that he *refused* to be wicked, and fall down before the image, because he only worshipped the true God, 'our Father,' you know; and, therefore, he and the other two good men were quite uninjured by the fire."

"Oh!" said Maggie, thoughtfully, "so you did, mammy, but I—" she lifted up her face to be kissed, and Mary found herself wondering what she could say in case the child remarked—which seemed highly probable—that "she did not believe it." Luckily, whatever the child *thought*, she didn't give expression to her unbelief, but concluded with, "I'm so sorry, but

I twite fordot." Then another happy thought struck her, and she asked, "Is Mr. Mont a true God, mammy?"

"Oh no, dear; he is only a good, kind man, and I hope we shall see him again soon, don't you?"

"Yes; but is Mr. Mont 'our Father,' mammy?" queried the child, persistently.

"No, no dear," replied Mary, in rather shocked tones." "Our Father, to whom we pray, is in heaven."

"Oh, yes, of *tourse* he is, I remember. Then, mammy, I'm afraid you must be very witted, betos I heard father tell Mr. Armstrong last Sunday that you worshipped the very ground Mr. Mont trodded on. I'm *so* sorry, mammy dear." The little arms were thrown around Mary's neck to pity her, the little voice went on lovingly, to comfort her. "But I'd rather be *witted* than go into the fire, wouldn't you, mammy dear?"

Poor Mary felt as hot and uncomfortable

as must the stokers of the seven times heated furnace, but she only buried her face in the child's curls, and sighed. "We all are wicked I'm afraid, dear, although God is so good to us. What does he do for you, Maggie? I told you the other day."

"He teeps me from harm by night and by day, and—and—!" Maggie paused.

"Is there anything more to say, dear?" said Mary; and the child repeated, "He teeps me from harm by night and by day, and then He *let's me go*," she finished quickly, well pleased with herself.

The door opened just as she finished her somewhat original addition, and Armstrong entered.

Mary knew that he was expected at the house, and had been anxiously awaiting his visit. He shook hands with her warmly, and smiled tenderly in answer to her questioning glance; then turned to Maggie. "No lollipops to-day, Miss Sweet-

tooth; we must keep them for another time. What is the matter with my little girl?"

"I've dot a bad pain in—in my—in my —*sash*," said Maggie, woefully, judging a pause before the last word; then bringing it out with melancholy satisfaction at the correctness of the situation, and—to prevent the possibility of mistake—pointing at the same time to the ribbon which encircled her waist.

Armstrong smiled; who wouldn't have? but since then he has never asked any of his very young lady friends, in what region their "pain" is situated. Young men take warning. Mary, with the greatest difficulty, cleared away a portion of her dress, which had apparently gone quite out of its way to become entangled round a button in the back of her chair, and Armstrong, without offering her the slightest assistance, sat down, murmuring rather incoherently, and with not a great amount

of pity in his voice, "Poor child! ah, yes! Poor little thing! yes!"

This was not satisfactory, and after a short pause he continued to Mary, in a sympathetic tone, "Mr. Lawrence has told you the great news, that he is not your father, has he not?"

"Yes," said Mary; adding eagerly, "but he has not told me who my parents are. He told me that he picked me up at sea, lashed on top of a wooden grating; that he could not discover anything about my people, though he tried very hard to do so, and that he decided upon bringing me up himself; thinking, no doubt," she added, with as much bitterness as her sweet nature had ever expressed, "that I might be made useful. Young as I was, I can remember something of that dreadful shipwreck, so I can believe *that* part of the story easily; and I think, indeed, I am almost certain that I should recognise again the one lady

who is always associated in my mind with that time, and who must be my mother. I can remember children too, but I don't fancy that I saw much of them, and the first thing that I recollect at all distinctly is being in lodgings with my father—Mr. Lawrence I mean—in London, and being sent to school regularly when I was six or seven years old."

"You have led a strange life for a lady," said Armstrong, in tones of deep interest, "and I am more pleased than I can tell you to know that to *me* has been left the happy task of discovering your parents." Mary looked at him, anxiously, and started slightly in her chair, but Maggie is asleep and must not be disturbed, so Mary sits still, as Armstrong continues, with much feeling, "yes, dear Miss Lawrence, I have discovered who your parents *were*, for I grieve to tell you that both are dead." Mary sighed, but did not speak, and Armstrong hurried on. "The clothes you had

on when picked up were marked M.O." —God forgive you, Jack Armstrong—"as Lawrence is prepared to swear"—God forgive you, Jim Lawrence—"and I having heard your story from your supposed father, you will forgive me taking so great an interest in you, will you not? and also the tale of the shipwreck from another family, immediately thought that you might be one of their lost relations; the lost niece of Mr. Ormby, of Westfield; the lost sister of Dicky and Vi Ormby."

Mary could not repress an exclamation of glad surprise. "What!" she cried, "young Mr. Ormby's *sister?* The Nipper's sister? Oh! Mr. Armstrong, how *can* I thank you sufficiently?"

"We won't speak of thanks, my dear Miss Ormby," said Armstrong, with a smile, which was answered brightly by Mary; "at least, *not yet*," he thought to himself before he continued aloud. "My suppositions proved correct, and there is no doubt what-

ever that you are the daughter of Mr. Richard Ormby—who was lost in the wreck of the Rupert, whilst homeward bound from the West Indies—and therefore niece of the Rev. John Ormby, now vicar of Westfield,—and sister of Dicky and Vi. Your memory must play you false in one or two particulars," he continued; thinking that he had better persuade her if possible, to forget all about the lady she had mentioned, and who, he thought, was, in all probability, *really* her mother. "Mr. Richard Ormby lost his wife, your mother, before he left Barbadoes; in fact, shortly after Vi and Dicky were born, so that the woman you remember, and imagine to have been your mother, must have been the nurse."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Mary, rather sadly. She had always thought of the lady, as her mother—"and yet, it seems strange, but, even now, I can almost hear

her calling me her 'precious one,' and her 'own darling child.'"

"Merely a nurse's terms of endearment," said Armstrong, quickly. "I should dismiss all such fancies now, if I were you, and look forward to the meeting with your relations."

"Oh! when shall it be, Mr. Armstrong? Very soon?"

"Yes; I hope in a day or two. We must prepare the Ormbys a little, you know. I am staying with them now, and will arrange all that. Mr. Lawrence had great difficulty in finding your baby clothes, which had been left with some of his things in London." How glibly the story came now. "And we did not wish to stir in the matter until we were *certain* of your identity. It was on account of that wish that Mr. Lawrence forbade you writing to Monkton, to let him know of your arrival in England, for he is constantly at the Vicarage. Although," and Arm-

strong looked up quickly, as he finished his sentence—"I knew what a hard trial *that* would be to you." But Mary's thoughts were with her newly-found relatives, and Armstrong was almost persuaded that he had no cause, after all, to be jealous of Cecil Monkton.

"I know very well" he said, rising from his chair with a smile; "I know that you want to have a good long think over all that I have told you, so I shall run away like a good boy. Wednesday will be a convenient day for you to go down to Westfield—and," he thought, "it won't give you much time to see Mr. Cecil, as he joins his ship on Thursday. Score on the wretched sailor there, I think!" He kissed Maggie, who sleepily pouted her baby lips to receive his chaste, *paternal* salute, and Mary smiled gaily at him as he left the room.

Returning to Lawrence's sitting room, he found Mary's ex-papa as he expected, sit-

ting boosily over the fire. Luckily, all their arrangements were completed; I say *luckily*, for Mr. Lawrence, at this time, was scarcely capable of arranging *anything*; *dis*-arrangement was more in his line as he sat —steadily boosing in his arm-chair; his wooden leg perched on a chair before him, it's fleshy "opposite member" resting on the fender, his collar and waistcoat unbuttoned, his necktie—nowhere!

"Hullo! m' Tulip" he exclaimed, boisterously, as Armstrong entered, and walked towards the fire place. "Glad t' see ye. Shundy again, I sh'pose! Seems t' come round deush'd quick! Don't it, m' flower?"

"I have explained to Mary all that we considered it necessary for her to know," said Armstrong, surlily, feeling how useless it was to talk to the old rascal now.

"D' you kiss 'er, m' flower?" hiccupped Mr. Lawrence, removing his tumbler from his lips after having quite decided that it

was empty, and replacing it slowly, and with great caution, upon the extreme edge of the table.

"No," replied Armstrong angrily. "Kiss her! Certainly not." And he took up his hat and gloves, and moved towards the door.

"B'cause" resumed Mr. Lawrence, slowly, and with much dignity; "F' you'd kissed 'er I sh'd think it 'ncumbent 'pon *me* as Chrish'n gentlem'n to '*mand*—I shay to *de*-mand'—your 'ntention! S'help me! Kiss th' book." And he looked towards the place where Armstrong had been standing; but the latter had made his exit, and, discovering that he was alone, the Christian gentleman murmured, thoughtfully, "Dev'lish rum! Can't be Shundy again aft'r all. Cert'nly thought I saw m' Tulip though! Nerves slightly d'sordered s'pose! Dose P'retic Saline!" And he settled down to more drinks—*not* of Pyretic Saline though.

Armstrong returned to Westfield late that evening, but not until Tuesday did he tell the Ormbys of his well-arranged discovery.

CHAPTER V.

I DON'T feel quite equal to giving a full and particular account of all the doings and sayings, the embracings and heart-felt gladness of the interested parties, in the various meetings on that eventful Wednesday; when Mary was received into the bosom of the Ormby family. Dicky and Vi had, of course, been wild to have her down, or to go to her, the moment Armstrong told them of his great discovery, on Tuesday; but he had persuaded them to be patient, and wait. Who could describe that Wednesday? Armstrong, *plausible* and untruthful; Lawrence, *sanctimonious* and untruthful; Dicky and Vi, wildly demonstrative; Mary, quietly demonstrative; Mr. Ormby, garrulous—except

concerning his lost brother—and Maggie, in the most trying stage of infantile excitement.

There, you have the principal members; arrange them as you like; you know what had been proved, and the arrangements for proving it quite well enough to fill in the tears of joy and without any farther assistance.

The only little hitch, during the day, arose when the time came for deciding what was to be done with Maggie. Mary had insisted upon bringing her to Westfield—much against Armstrong's wish—and was very anxious that the little adopted sister should be allowed to remain there too. Mr. Ormby was afraid of the additional expense, but gave way when he found that no nurse would be required, and, to the great delight of Mary, Vi and Dicky, and the intense disgust—hardly to be disguised—of Jack Armstrong; Miss Maggie—still retaining the name of Law-

rence—was admitted into the Vicarage household. The brother-in-law in prospective, had by no means calculated on the child's constant presence at Westfield.

What he had been anxious for, and what he had now succeeded in obtaining, was a position for Mary. His future plans, we helped him think over, in the last chapter, and it was very bitter to him to learn that even here he was to be followed by Maggie's inquisitive looks.

When the Lawrences had first returned to London from Gibraltar—and Mr. Jim had lost no time in finding him out, and imparting to him the ugly story of San Roque—he had met Mary again; had taken care to meet her often; and had really fallen in love; honestly, passionately, in love with her—for the time at any rate—and she had never recognised in him the man who had frightened her on the Almeida at Gibraltar.

Mr. and Mrs. Monkton and Cecil dined

at the Vicarage that Wednesday evening. It was Cecil's last day there for some months; and, delighted as he was at seeing Mary and Maggie again, he was far from feeling satisfied at the startling events of the day. He thought it most unnecessary that Mary should have been forbidden to let him know of her arrival in England; he distrusted Armstrong, and knew Lawrence to be a villain. In the face of Lawrence's story of how he had found her, and of the initials marked upon her clothes, it was impossible to doubt that Mary was the lost Miss Ormby; besides, there appeared to be no reason why the two men who had proved her so should have wished to do so falsely; still he was sorry to leave whilst such great changes were taking place. Mrs. Monkton was languidly rejoiced at everybody's good fortune, but kept a watchful eye upon her step-son, and speedily decided that she must get him to propose to lady Blanche

Mereweather—her own choice—as soon as he returned from his dreadful voyage. As she plaintively put it to her hardly-used self, it was no good having got Vi safely out of his way if he was to be caught by her Ocean-given sister. "She looks so confidingly at him that she must imagine the game to be in her own hands," thought the Lady of Tremlett; "and what an innocent, trusting expression she has; it is wonderful. What a loss for the stage. Now there's that great annoying Cecil whispering to her again, and how she blushes. It is perfect. How *can* she do it? Ah! I suppose we all could at eighteen. I verily believe that a naval officer would flirt with anyone, rich or poor, high or low, black or white. Fancy kissing a black; and that horrid Mr. Daintree says he likes it; and actually raved to me the other day about their *pouting* or *clinging* lips, I forget which. Merciful heavens!" and the lady shuddered.

There was yet more excitement in store for them before that eventful day ended.

Scarcely had they commenced dinner when a telegram arrived from one of the assistant paymasters of the *Duke* to Dicky, telling him to return from leave as soon as possible, as he was appointed to H.M.S. *Star*, a corvette just commissioned as commodore's ship on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa station.

More indescribable emotions; smothered curses against the admiralty; execrations at the service; devilings of the sea. "And yet," cried Vi, in the acme of astonishment! "they *marry*, ye spinsters and bachelors! These naval wanderers actually have the nerve to ask girls to marry them; these men, of whom one may safely aver that one never knows when one may have them, where one may have them, or for how long one may have them. They are *the* most unsatisfactory people to know anything of; and if any of them

should ever *dare* to ask me to engage myself to him, I'd — box his ears," concluded the excited young damsel.

"Under *existing* circumstances," said Mr. Monkton, with a smile, "they would *hardly* expect a more satisfactory reply, dear."

Vi blushed, and looked stupid. Her engagement had been totally forgotten when she spoke. She turned rather shyly towards Armstrong, but only to find his eyes fixed upon Mary, and that he was apparently utterly unconscious that he had a betrothed, or that she had just forgotten all about their recent engagement.

"Isn't it a shame, darling?" she said, just glancing from Jack Armstrong to Mary, and then addressing her uncle, who was as usual seated next her. "They are all down upon poor little me; even our boy, who is being sent away again so soon, darling, has nothing to say for his charming but unappreciated sister."

The old man replied by a cunning smile.

He had been very quiet and thoughtful since the telegram arrived, and now, seizing Vi's arm, he said in an eager whisper, "We won't let him go Vi; he must *run*. *That's* our plan, isn't it, Vi? I had it all arranged a minute ago, but I don't see it so clearly now; so you must manage it. Why, if I had not deserted, I should be a soldier to this day, as I've often told you. I remember, as if it happened yesterday, I had broken out of the ranks to have a drink of water, and—I was only a private, you know—and the weather was very close, and so I—I broke from the ranks, and——We *won't* let him go, will we, Vi?" faltered the old man, breaking down completely.

"We'll run together, won't we, uncle?" said Dicky; but his eyes never left his plate, and his lips quivered as he spoke.

His uncle answered not a word, but he laid his shaking hand on the Nipper's head, and prayed God to bless his boy, as Vi

rose from her chair; and, quieting him as she so well knew how, led him upstairs, and saw him comfortably settled in his own room.

Dicky's ship was not to leave England for a couple of weeks, and he would have several days' leave before sailing, so that his good-byes would not have to be spoken just yet. He had a capital skipper, too, in his new ship—Captain Le Hunte—who had just been appointed commodore at the Cape.

Cecil bade the Ormbys farewell that night, and started for Portsmouth by the first train in the morning; and as there is generally plenty of "fun, diversion, and amusement" in an Indian trooper, we can't do better than make the trip to India with him.

Some of our old friends will be there; also, Daintree, of course. The old doctor of the *Thunderbomb*, who had tried hard to escape his appointment; Blanche Dutton, going as a private friend of the captain's,

under the wing of her married sister, Margaret Faulkner, and Captain Hawthorne, late of the 150th, now of the 160th Fusiliers.

It was Friday morning before Cecil Monkton and Daintree reported themselves to the senior lieutenant—troop ships don't carry commanders—of the *Tigris*, as having come on board to join; but as she was not to sail until the following Tuesday, no troops had embarked, and the naval element alone was represented. The huge saloon was comparatively deserted; troop ships carrying few naval officers, *no* youngsters.

On Monday morning the scene changes. "Tommy Atkins" and his officers, their wives, children, and baggage, embark, accompanied by swarming friends and relations, who come, seemingly, to increase the confusion, and cause many a black mark against naval officers to be made in the "Defaulters' book,"

which is kept always under way, up "top-side."

Why can't they say good-bye, wipe their eyes, and endeavour to wash their handkerchiefs with the rest of their dirty linen, *at home?* But that would never do; the pageant would be completely ruined; and therefore we must strive for contentment, counting "wailing and lamentation" as merely a necessary appendage to the pomp and circumstance of possible wars.

Daintree was officer of the day, as on Thursday the *Tigris* prepared to cast off from the railway jetty in Portsmouth dockyard.

It was 11.0 a.m.; all the troops and etceteras for India were on board, and in ten minutes more, visitors, with the exception of a few friends of the naval officers who were going to Spithead in the ship, would have to go on shore.

The paymaster had finished his last argument—until to-morrow—with Mrs.

Deputy Surgeon-General Adams, who ranked, according to date of commission, with Mrs. Colonel, and didn't see why, and *wouldn't* see why, she shouldn't have an equally good cabin. The paymaster had the arrangement of these delicate little matters. Poor paymaster! his life for the first few days of each trip was not all sunshine; his path was all unstrewn with roses; he rarely emerged from his cabin except on duty; he found it dangerous to do so.

"Please sir," said a military officer's servant, saluting Daintree, and holding out what appeared to be a case of cartridges; "Please sir, my master told me to give you this to take care of for him. He thinks you'd better to 'ave it stored away in the ship's magazine."

"The devil he does!" exclaimed Daintree. "Well I *am* blessed! And who might your master be, my man?"

"Second-lieutenant Black, sir, 160th

Fusiliers," replied the servant, withdrawing the outstretched hand and case, and again saluting, as it began to dawn upon his private-soldierly intellect that there was some mistake somewhere.

"Ah!" said Daintree, "well, tell Second-lieutenant Black, of the 160th Fusiliers, that the officer of the day will be glad to speak to him at his earliest convenience;" adding to himself, "shall I have a row with the young noodle, or stand him a drink? Less bother to stand,—yes, we'll make it a drink."

Away went the servant, and our old friend, Captain Hawthorne, who was acting as adjutant of the troops on board, and who had heard what had passed, went up to Daintree rather anxiously.

"I say, old fellow," said he; "don't run him in too much; it would be such a bad start for us."

"Run him in," laughed Daintree, "not I. I'm going to run the contents of a small

bottle into him though, if you've no objection, you must help me congratulate him on being the coolest fish I've ever met, —fresh water or salt"

"That's all right, I was afraid by your sending for him that you were riled. He's awfully young and green, just joined, and probably thought that there was only a warrant or a petty officer on duty in harbour. Here he comes," added Hawthorne, as a smooth-faced, youthful subaltern, looking very uncomfortable, came towards them.

Two or three of the senior subalterns had heard of the joke of his sending his cartridges to be taken care of by one of the naval lieutenants, and had succeeded in frightening him considerably.

"I must apologise, sir," he commenced to Daintree, but was quickly cut short by "yes, by Jove, I should think you ought to, come into the saloon, and I'll receive your apologies over a liquor. Come along, Hawthorne, you'll join us."

Corks were flying merrily inside, many chums having a last drink together. There too, on the opposite side to the entrance door, away from the traffic and some of the din, were two old majors bidding farewell to their married daughters, whose husbands were standing, rather sheepishly, on the other side of the table. Widowers —and assuredly when in India to be counted as childless—was it strange that the fathers' grey heads should be bowed in their last few moments, and that even a few soldiers' tears should break out of the guard-room.

On the poop is many a parting; parents and children, brothers and sisters, lovers, friends, and relations.

"God bless you, Willie, my dear boy," falters a grand-looking old lady, who is standing on the fore part, her arms tightly clasped around her son's neck, as she kisses him again and again; whilst he, forgetful of brand new uniform, aye, even of "soldierly

bearing," scarcely dares trust himself to bid her "good-bye."

"Come, cheer up, Emily; you make the boy quite down in the mouth," says the hearty old gentleman, on whose arm she leans, and who had turned away, not many seconds ago, just to wipe his spectacles, and then observe most attentively a lamp-post on the end of the jetty. "We'll soon have the boy back," he continued—*someone* had to speak—"home again, well and jolly; eh, Will? Good-bye! my boy." Then comes such a hand clasp, and father and mother move slowly towards the entry port. But once more the mother turns, and strains her boy to her; the "God bless you" is unheard this time, unless it was breathed in that sob—the only sound that escapes her quivering lips. With handkerchief closely pressed to her eyes, she allows herself to be led away by her husband, and the youngster, walking to the poop rails, leans over them, sadly—as many another bent figure around

him is doing—until the excitement of steaming out of harbour arouses everyone.

"Who is that dear little girl, crying as if her sixteen-year-old heart would break?" asked Daintree, as he found himself alongside Blanche Dutton, and her sister, on the after part of the poop.

"Hasn't she a sweet expression, doctor?" he added, to old Giles, whom we met in the *Thunderbomb*, and who had just been pitching into a sergeant's wife—acting as nurse for the cruise—for allowing one of the children to almost disappear down the saloon skylight. Old Giles shuffled quickly along. "What? *sweet*, d'ye call it, eh?" he exclaimed, angrily; and Daintree would have heard something of what sweetness really was, had not the old doctor, seeing Blanche close by, declined an argument with his usual warmness, and trotted on.

"What a horrid old fellow!" said Blanche. "Who is he, Mr. Daintree?"

"He's our fleet surgeon; you won't see

much of him, if he can help it. But, touching the young one? What about her?"

"Not much; poor little thing!" said Blanche. "She has just left school, and I don't think has much to cry for. She is going out to her father, a Colonel Stewart, and the mother goes too. They said good-bye to all their English friends long ago, so she is only crying because everyone else is hard at it."

"Affectionate, impressionable creature!" exclaimed Daintree. "I think, do you know, that, as a sort of host, don't you know, it would only be civil to try and cheer her up a bit. A crumb of comfort to 'bread and butter' in distress! eh?"

"Most creditable feeling, I'm sure," laughed Blanche. "I will help you administer it. Come along, Maggie, we will both assist to scatter crumbs." Miss Effie Stewart was soon laughing as gaily as she had before been sobbing convulsively.

"And is it really true, that I shall have

to sit next to you at *every* meal, all the way?" she asked, in reply to a remark of Daintree's, that he was told off to take special care of the single ladies.

"Yes, no escape," he said, "unless we find that you talk too much, or lose your appetite; in which case, we have a dear old doctor, who will be delighted to take you under his charge. Miss Dutton will be opposite, with a capital fellow, belonging to us, Cecil Monkton."

"It will be glorious fun," said Blanche; "mind you take care of me, Maggie. Ah! now we are off!"

The gang-board creaks and groans, as it is shoved clear of the side, and lowered upon the jetty. The securing chains are let go, the screw makes a rush round, then—as if it knows the work it has before it—settles down to its revolutions slowly and sedately, and Her Majesty's troop-ship *Tigris* breasts the flood tide, and steams down the harbour.

A shout goes up from the great-coated

swarm which lines the fore part of the ship, then a waving of hats and handkerchiefs, an answering cheer from the jetty, and before the sobs of the women have a chance of again becoming audible, the band strikes up "Rule Britannia," followed by "The British Grenadier," and we pass the *Duke of Wellington*, flag-ship of the commander-in-chief, where some half-dozen fellows, with glasses raised, are looking out of the ward-room ports to criticise the "Indian lot." The old *Victory*, with her compliment of two men and a boy, sent from the *Duke*, to do all the "charing" and drop a tear—value two shillings, possibly, half-a-crown—as they silently point to the spot where Nelson fell. The *St. Vincent*, and then the mouth of the harbour is reached, and we keep along the southern beach, passing Victoria pier, close to the old Sally Port, and the Southern pier; the sight of which latter promenade, and the thought of how long it must be ere she can again repel a

too ardent, or attract a too diffident admirer upon its boards, proves almost too much for Miss Blanche Dutton.

> As slow our ship her trembling track
> Against the wind is cleaving,
> Her trembling pennant still look'd back
> To that dear land 'twas leaving;
> So loath to part from all we love,
> From all the links that bind us;
> So turn our hearts as on we rove
> To those we've left behind us.

"Moore knows how to put it nicely for us, doesn't he?" said Cecil, who had just left his station forward, and now joined our group.

"Ah, Mr. Monkton, you have an appropriate bit of poetry for every occasion."

Cecil smiled as Mrs. Faulkner spoke. She had believed that he *meant* all his quotations once.

It is far too cold a day for either lolling on the sand or strolling on the pier, and with the exception of an enthusiastic wave from the umbrella of old retired Commander Sternfast, who is enjoying his constitutional roll; and a long shot from

the catapult of Master Jack, his nephew, which luckily falls short and unnoticed, save by a shrill cry, and "Wouldn't I warm ye," from Mrs. Corporal Macpherson, who has observed the dastardly attempt, we plunge along almost unheeded. I say *plunge* advisedly, for there is a decided swell on, and the little knots of the "Outward Bound" are gradually breaking up; the gentlemen to fortify themselves with a modicum of brandy, the ladies *probably* to do ditto, but *ostensibly* to see that their things are all right, and their dear children comfortable. As regards the latter, if such is their present condition, let us trust that they may soon be intensely *otherwise*, for comfort with them, judging from the sounds that force themselves through the door, through the port, through each separate jalousie of the nursery, must mean *Babel*—pure, shrill, unadulterated Babel. At Spithead, we stop for a short time to send the pilot and few remaining

visitors back in the dockyard tug, and then we enter the Solent. Here the ship is steady again, and people begin with one consent to clamour for luncheon. The old stagers, mysteriously hatted, wonderfully clothed, have been seated in readiness for the last half-hour. Now, the ladies' cabin in the saloon, next door to the "precious ones" nursery, and the dove cot also—as its name suggests—a ladies' cabin on the main deck, are besieged by gallant husbands.

"May I come in, dear?" coolly demands the warrior at the door.

"No, no. Certainly *not*," rises in indignant tones from everyone but that special warrior's wife.

"Annie, my love." This in a tone of entreaty—Blake had been only married a fortnight. "You had better try and eat something, dear; we are quite quiet now."

Little Mrs. Blake and young Mrs. Faulkner — our brides — are the first to

appear, coming up from the dove-cot. It should never be said that the voice of *their* "hubbies" had been heard in vain. The other doves—Blanche Dutton and Effie Stewart — are still with Daintree and Monkton.

The poop would be deserted but for that rug-muffled figure, visible upon one of the seats right aft, and consisting of two indistinct portions, each representing, perhaps Dr. Adams, of the A.M.D., perhaps the wife of his bosom. Together they elevate the rug; together they slide towards the rails; together—but never mind. Have they not promised to "keep each other in sickness and health?" It apparently has not been suggested to them that the marriage service says nothing about keeping other people sick, or they would surely seek their cabin. To us it appertaineth to make this suggestion, and we make it in the cause of scenery and forgetfulness. Approaching the *ruggy* mound, we cough; we speak gently and

persuasively; finally, we *suggest*, blandly yet forcibly, as is our happy way, and—we meet with our reward. Dr. and Mrs. Adams' rug is lost to sight in No. 1 horse box—*i.e.*, main deck, mid-ship cabin. How its owners existed until we were across the Bay; what they eat, drank, thought about, or did, was a profound mystery even to the neighbouring horse boxers. Many were the opinions hazarded, many the hints given. At length, with that quick perception of ways and means which belongs superabundantly to inmates of pandemonium—the lower deck cabins—a junior subaltern made a proposal, which was carried by acclamation. To him was immediately accorded the honour of carrying it into execution. With the tip, cautious, he approached their servant, obtained an answer, and our minds were at rest. That answer, dear reader, is unpublished; the subject of which it treats is unrecorded amongst the pleasures of life

in a trooper. The fore part of the upper deck is also almost deserted, the men having gone below to their dinners, and two wives only remaining propped up on the wooden seats which run along the starboard side for the use of the women. Mrs. Corporal Macpherson was one, her internal arrangements being presumably in a state of mutiny, for she confided to her neighbour, Mrs. Bombardier O'Flynn, that she was obliged to refuse her victuals, as "her stummick was that turned and upset, she could keep nothink on it."

The captain and navigating lieutenant, together with Sir Geoffrey Riling, colonel of the 160th, left the bridge—Captain Braddon always allowed field officers and ladies there—and went down to luncheon; Lieutenant Coxwell—the Thin'un—remaining in charge, with his military officer of the watch, on the poop. Luncheon goes on merrily enough until the ship passes the Needles and out of the Solent. Then

the lamps begin once more their uneven, drunken swing; the chairs and plates slide, and the younger ladies, invigorated by "fiz," and unsteady *only* by reason of lacking "sea legs," stagger off under the somewhat erratic guidance of their gallant husbands. No refusal of admittance to the ladies' cabin now; the wives have already agreed that in times of misery, like the present, petty forms of delicacy must be pitched overboard, and husbands allowed in, if it's only to bring food and sustaining kisses. So, for the next few days, the Misses Dutton and Stewart—not liking to be ungracious, and refuse their consent to any such arrangements—are in a perpetual state of little frightened feminine shrieks and hurried disappearances beneath the bed-clothes. They soon got used to it, for, as Mrs. Bartram said—her husband is the senior captain—"What does it matter, my dear? If you can't look upon them quite as

stewards—and what a dreadfully plain man ours is, to be sure—you can always think they're parsons or doctors," an idea which brought great comfort to the shocked maidens. Those mysteriously garmented old campaigners are not driven under cover for some time, but at last even they disappear, with the single exception of one remarkably stout old party—Mrs. Quartermaster—who, supported on either side by a youthful, plump, and apparently whole miss, has taken up her position upon the stern cushions, whence she smiles genially and approvingly upon the natives of the lower deck, as, with distorted features, they one by one rush below: and whence, also, at each roll, she glides softly and easily beneath the table amidships, only to be extricated by her plump progeny with the ship's backward motion; still wearing her genial smile, ever encouraging them to do likewise.

So she and her progeny smile! so time and the ship roll on! until the dinner-gong sounds. *One* table, and that not a long one, suffices for that night's dinner-party; and its sole occupants are naval officers and a few, a very few, of the oldest "old Indians."

CHAPTER VI.

WE cross that dreadful bay safely, and with a reasonable amount of comfort. Once more we have a passing look at the Rock, and, after about ten days at sea, we arrive at Malta. People know each other fairly well by this time. Each maiden has her special friend, so, needless to say, has each grass widow, and a considerable sprinkling of the wives. Daintree finds his command—the single ladies—by no means a sinecure. As usual in H.M's troopships, the ladies' admirers are, for the most part, naval men.

Those dear creatures—the ladies, I mean —are fond of quiet returns for their sweetness; and the officers of the ship can add materially to their comforts. Do they want

a novel? The naval officer's cabin is well supplied. Would they like a walk on the bridge? Who so safe an escort as the naval officer? "Will it blow to-night? Is it likely to blow to-morrow night, or the night after? When shall we anchor at Bombay? Do you think that my husband will come on board at once? Might I take Willie to see the sheep? What opera will be on at Malta?" All these questions the naval officer is prepared to answer promptly and with decision And then the soldier—ladies' man though he be, in a general way—somehow does not care for the society of the ladies of his own particular regiment.

Very polite is Old Jinks,—one of the senior captains of the 160th, and not more than five years older than the "chief,"—*excessively* polite is Old Jinks in his morning salute, and his tender morning inquiries concerning the regimental matron's health, the regimental children's comfort; but the *duty* questions over, Old Jinks feels for the

cigar-case in the innermost recesses of his patrol jacket, and, smiling his pleasantest, edges softly away from the last-joined fascination, to enjoy his morning baccy, and give this advice to the youngsters on the smoking part of the poop:—"If you want peace, or, to put it better, if you *don't* want constant rows, avoid chummeyising with the regimental woman-kind. I've seen the folly of it." Jinks is an old bachelor, certainly, and has suffered his first tinge of gout since we entered the Mediterranean; but he's a man of parts, and a prime favourite in his regiment, so no one despises his advice, as he lights his weed and passes on the slow-match.

But to-day, Friday, we anchored at ten a.m. in the Grand Harbour, Malta, having passed within sight of Algiers on Tuesday last amid general excitement, and, after having spent hours during the last week in arranging possible holiday programmes for our stay at Valetta, shall we waste

time tramping the poop? No. Rather let us, hoping we do not intrude, attach ourselves to what promises to be the most cheery party of the many now *parading*—that's a good trooping word—at the entry port.

Our gallant skipper, Colonel Sir Geoffrey, and Lady Riling, Mrs. Stewart and her daughter, Major and Mrs. Faulkner with Blanche Dutton, and Monkton, and Daintree, are going to make a day of it together. We all go off in the steam cutter, and cleave our way through dhysos innumerable to the Hungry steps.

Five minutes interview with Michael and Sons, to make arrangements for purchasing oranges, then a drive to the Shade Reale, and more purchases; this time, gloves, bangles, lace, and cigarettes from Morich and Co., of Palace Square, and Michael Borg and tribe. How our friends are fleeced, especially the men, in their great bargains in gloves, sweets, and scents

for their fair messmates, it needs not to describe. We are in Malta—enough.

Military uniforms, and priestly garbs are common, and the wearers of the former, as they toil up the steps of the various stradas, wish, I'm certain, that "good form" permitted them to carry canes sufficiently long to be of even the slightest use to them. The navy is, to all appearances, but scantily represented, although as some of the Mediterranean fleet are here now, there is no scarcity of naval officers; the reason is, that the latter are not obliged to appear in the streets of Valetta in uniform.

A general titter arises amongst our party as we wander—is it the twelfth or thirteenth time?—past the entrance to the club, and descry approaching us, an already well-known pair.

He is a senior subaltern, *she* is a grass widow. He is tall, very tall. His legs are long, very long, and lengthy in his

stride. She is short, absurdly short. Her limbs are doubtless in perfect proportion, and the couple make a pretty picture as he, from his six feet two inches elevation, looks down, with a certain air of protection and interest, upon the little figure at his side, whose upturned eyes beam bewitchingly in the distance, whose upraised face wears a happy expression of appropriation, and whose lower extremities "break into double time" at about his every third step. Merrily she trots, sedately he stalks by, and we take care to extinguish all outward and visible signs of mirth, for she is—well, she is small, and sure to be vicious.

Daintree observed for general information that if he was that young party's proprietor, he'd put several hundred miles and many "sickly stations" between her and the six-footer on their arrival in India. The captain smiled, and asked Mrs. Stewart if she did not think Mr.

Daintree's sentence would be too severe. Mrs. Stewart's reply appeared to be duly appreciated, but we—who were with her daughter—did *not* hear it. Miss Dutton and Miss Stewart were loud in their denunciations of married flirts, and Mrs. Faulkner simply could *not* understand how women could do such a thing. Whereupon that intrepid major, her husband, seizes her dear little hand, at what he believes to be a favourable moment, and squeezes it fondly—glove and all, to the rapturous glee of three at least of the party.

Strange that some of our friends—very much married, or about to be so—seem to imagine that if they seize one of her hands—there is only one *her* and only two *hands*—and stroke it tenderly, without looking that way themselves, their skilful manœuvre is bound to pass unobserved. Shall we ever come to *that?* "Wait, and you'll see," as your mamma

told you not a score of years ago, in answer to your oft-repeated query, "What is there for pudding?"

There goes Mrs. Bartram, chatting and laughing gaily with two of her most ardent admirers; the one, Brown, an artilleryman; the other, Jones, an engineer; both returning to India from sick leave. Take notice of this case of Brown and Jones, almost the only one known in the trooping service of a gunner and sapper managing to saddle horses. The hatred of each other which they are in duty bound to feel as representatives respectively of the gunning and sapping interests, is counteracted by their hatred as rivals in admiration, and they maintain a state of armed neutrality. There is something wrong in to-day's arrangements, for both are absorbed in admiration at the *same* time. Close on their heels, and often joining pleasantly in their conversation, comes the inevitable Maltese black-

guard, loaded with parcels. In rear again, gazing vacantly into shop windows, wondering how long he is to be dragged about the streets, also whether the subalterns are good for the luncheon, saunters wearily the lady's husband.

But deuced little fun is to be got out of Valetta, at all events, by people who merely wish to make a day of it, so if you will kindly believe that the lunch was good, and —according to that most reliable authority, Daintree—the afternoon drive considerably better; and also kindly arrange to your own satisfaction the occupants of each carriage, we will look in at the club and read the papers, whilst they visit St. John's chapel, the armoury, the Capuchins, and everything else of interest. Most of our messmates fetch on board to dinner, as they have to dress for the opera.

Naval and military officers appear there in mess uniform "by order," and in the stalls from choice. A few—principally on

account of having ladies with them—occupy boxes, and everyone of high or low situation seems to enjoy "Faust" once more. It was raining hard when Mephistopheles, taking the arm of his unwilling chum, Faust, disappeared in blue flame, *en roûte* to the banks of the Styx, and going off in boats to the ship was almost as unpleasant a journey, especially for the ladies. "Our brides" indeed were not allowed to venture on the deep, their husbands thinking it safer for them to remain on shore that night, at the hotel. Considerate fellows! They remained on shore, *too*.

To those who arrived on board wet and rather miserable, at 11.30 p.m., what could be more acceptable or absolutely *necessary*, than a small drop of something warm; particularly as, although the bar was closed, Monkton had a supply of that needful something. Our maiden messmates were quite sure they should be "so most awfully tipsy," but even the certainty of

arriving at that remarkable stage of intoxication did not materially affect their consumption of the liquor. It was only because Mrs. Stewart and dear Mrs. Bartram wished it though ; simply because they wished it. It was " after hours," and the ladies' cabin was lighted only by one " extra " lamp, when its occupants retired. The two newly-mated birds being on shore, Blanche and Effie—the remaining doves—deserted the nest, and were found room for in the bunks of the saloon cabin. What wonderful creatures ladies are, in the matter of " finding room " for each other, if they wish.

After they had drawn their curtain, and the usual *undressing conversazione* had commenced behind it, Coxwell, the man of ponderous bulk, was seized with a sudden conviction that this was his birthday, and rushed to his cabin, whence he shortly emerged, beaming with the accumulated happiness of thirty summers, and bearing

a plentiful supply of various drinks. Who could shirk so plain a duty? Who could avoid drinking the Thin'un's health? No one even thought of raising the question; the lantern was replaced in the centre of the table, and a select and enthusiastic few grouped themselves around it. Merrily coursed the liquor down, cheerily slid the bottles, until there was silence in the ladies' cabin, and, forgetting its proximity, Hawthorne proceeded to relate, with singular attention to detail, an amusing experience of his "day in Valetta."

"Ah-heh-hem!"—a cough of surpassing significance, released too surely from the throat of Mrs. Stewart, brought the story to an abrupt conclusion, and the select few wore shame-faced aspects by the flickering light of the lantern. Silently they rose to depart, when a faint titter—was Brown, the gunner, romancing when he swore that he would know Mrs. Bartram's laugh anywhere?—was heard, and as its welcome

sound fell on their ears, another soothing surprise completely o'erflooded them, and, for the second time that evening, their "outer-mans" had to stand a wet. Was this to be stood without retaliation? Scarcely. But, after a whispered consultation, it was decided to choose some other evening for settling the little account, and all would have been peaceful to-night, had not the too observant Daintree detected a piece of possible sport, in the shape of a blanket, the corner of which protruded temptingly through the metal work on the top of the bulkhead; having probably been kicked off by the fair inmate of the top bunk during a particularly powerful attack of the "sweet repose" so invariably allowed to her sex.

Standing upon the bent backs of Coxwell and Hawthorne, Daintree, discoverer and would-be pilferer, approached with caution the coveted spoil. A moment of supreme expectation followed, as he seized it gently,

and commenced with care to drag it downwards. But he was not to have it all his own way, for the ladies, more than ever on the alert since the suspicious silence on the other side, were quite equal to the occasion, and after the first few inches gained, he could obtain no more. Rather the opposite, as in the excitement of the moment, and his eagerness for loot, he shifted his position from Coxwell's back to his head, and, probably, lit upon a more than ordinarily soft part of it; for with a feeling "Oh, I say; d——n it all;" the Thin'un fell forward as flat as was possible for a man of his well rounded proportions; and the ever-luckless Daintree was left clinging desperately to six inches of blanket.

Still hoping to drag it out, he held on bravely, when additional weight was applied on the other side, drawing him up close to the bulkhead, and, if Hawthorne had not seized him round the waist and remained hanging too, he must have either

let go at once or have followed the blanket through to its owner's bunk. The latter alternative being physically, and—need I add—morally impossible. With Hawthorne attached, the weights on either side were evenly balanced, but it is not in human nature for a fellow to hang on to the end of a blanket, with another fellow suspended round his waist, for any great length of time, and so Daintree soon discovered, for with a considerate admonition to "stand right under," he relinquished his hold, and was folded in Hawthorne's embrace, as they rolled on the deck together.

What had happened to the other scale could only be guessed at by the anxious listeners, as the sound of descending bodies was succeeded, without delay, by a couple of ominous bumps, and the spirited clatter of well-practised tongues.

Could that be the usually cheery voice of Mrs. Bartram; that vexed tone we hear exclaiming, "Do get up, Blanche. I'm

quite smothered under that great blanket." Undoubtedly, it could be; undoubtedly, it was, and it did not improve as it continued—

"*You* can't be hurt; *you* didn't fall out of the top bunk."

"No, I didn't," retorted Blanche in dubious tones. "But you came down on top of me, and I think!—I'm quite *certain* that I've broken one of my legs." And the dubiousness of tone almost decided in favour of tears.

"Nonsense, child," said Mrs. Bartram, petulantly.

A rustling of bed clothes from the inner side of the cabin was now audible to the listeners at the door, as Miss Effie Stewart left her sanctuary, and joined her bosom friend upon the deck, expressing her opinion, without delay, that none of her darling's limbs seemed to be very much broken. Apparently, the two continued to mingle their tears and laughter together,

on the deck, for the last remark overheard by the birthday keepers, as they crept stealthily away, was from Mrs. Stewart, and implied that if those girls did not get up and go to bed again at once, she should insist upon their going down to their proper cabin, the dove-cot.

Daintree, who had stolen off with the others, thought it possible to obtain more sport yet, and returned for a parting shot.

Tapping at the door sharply, he sang out, in disguised tones, "Lights out in the cabin, ma'am! Lights out in the cabin, ma'am."

"Oh, wait one minute, *please*, steward; I have only *one* little light." This request came in imploring accents from Mrs. Bartram, who, far away from the door, had been deceived by the voice.

"Werry sorry, ma'am," replied our acting steward, "werry sorry to disoblige a lady; but orders is orders, likewise lights is lights, and must be put out accordingly."

"Oh, Mr. Daintree! you horrid man!" exclaimed the lady, as, having put the lamp out, she recognized the voice, too late. "I'll never forgive you, *never*." And, groping her way towards Blanche, she continued in a whisper, which was certainly not intended to reach the door, "Blanche dear, give me one of your biscuits, please do. That wretched man made me swallow them both so quickly that I had nothing ready to take the taste away. Ugh!—Oh for the very tiniest nob of sugar!"

"You shall have the very biggest one you can find, and put it down to my account in the morning," said Daintree, in his most sympathetic tones. "They say that *jam* is the best thing, if you *only* have it handy. But *perhaps* you haven't."

"Ugh! you wretch, go away," gasped the sufferer, and, feeling satisfied with the latter part of his entertainment, the "wretch" replied politely, "I have to

thank you for a most pleasant evening," and went.

Several of the ladies were late at breakfast the next morning, and when they did appear, seemed ill at ease. However, a judicious administration of neat three-cornered notes, and respectfully tender inquiries, soon put things straight. What wouldn't women forgive—at sea?

An interesting ceremony took place shortly after that same happy reconciliation; *interesting*, simply from its kindly meaning, and as showing the right good fellowship existing amongst our messmates, male and female. Soon after 10 o'clock—the ship being under orders to sail at 10.30 precisely—a party of young officers lined the gangway on either side and, strangely enough, just as they took up their positions, "our brides," with their husbands, came alongside and up the ladder. It then became evident that an unobtrusive feeling of anxiety concerning the welfare of those

young people, left all alone in that distant land, and in a strange hotel for a whole night, was the sole cause of the unwonted assembly: for as the ladies came on board each of their thoughtful friends saluted gravely, and with much solicitude; then, satisfied apparently that there was no reason for further uneasiness, said, "*Good* morning, *so* glad to see you again;" and rather hurriedly—almost as if afraid that, the strain once relaxed, their delight might become obtrusive—retired.

What there could possibly be, in this simple and courteous welcome, to throw the recipients into sudden and, one might say, *painful* confusion, we, who had gladly consented to take part in the demonstration, were unable to see. Mrs. Bartram *looked* at us for several seconds, in some such manner as one would regard a long-tailed rabbit or a humpless camel; when, thinking that as a married woman she might explain matters, we applied to her. She did not *say* much,

merely advising us to ask Lady Riling. We did not ask Lady Riling, because we were by no means spooney on her or her conversation. Again, why the ladies became so noisy, directly after Mrs. Bartram went into the cabin, that the first-lieutenant had to send down from the poop, in the middle of prayers, to ask them to kindly stop laughing, was certainly unknown to us, although that marvellous woman, Mrs. B., insisted upon our being in the joke, and, after dinner, actually whispered us, behind her fan, that we were "really *too* bad," and had nearly been the death of them all by so shamefully chaffing poor Mrs. Faulkner and Mrs. Blake for sleeping on shore. Extraordinary person.

Nothing of much importance happened for the first few days after our leaving Malta. It is true that little Mrs. Blake, who read poetry and adored her husband, became violently hysterical one evening, because the brute told her that "the way she

was going on with Coxwell, a married man, too, was disgraceful, and he'd be hanged if he'd stand it." Coxwell wanted her to act, and they had read over a play together. Such is the confidence of the newly married. It is true, too, that the white paint at the back of the wheel house was so kicked and rubbed off by people sitting together on the rails around that secluded spot *after* sunset, that a rope was ordered to be lashed across every evening, and that that rope was found, on the morning following its first appearance, cut through by a pair of *scissors*. Comment is needless. These things, we say, are undoubtedly true, but we do not vouch for the truth of a report that, during the gale of wind we experienced a few days before reaching Port Said, Mrs. Faulkner, who, until quite recently, as Miss Dutton, had always had her sister to assist in undressing her, found that the latter and the other "doves" were positively too ill to move, so had to send for her gallant husband to

stand just outside the door, and, so to speak, pull the strings. This we cannot vouch for, although we had it on the best authority, namely, that of the man whose cabin adjoined the dove-cot; but then, what wonderful tales that man did tell to be sure! What a flutter they would have raised in the dovery. We also accepted with reservations a statement to the effect that that idiot Blake, after making it up with his wife, and even allowing her on one occasion to take a turn or two upon the bridge with the officer of the watch, used to leave his third part of a cabin at an unearthly hour each morning and stand outside the dove-cot whistling a signal, when she would jump out of bed, and open the cabin door just wide enough to put her hand through for him to kiss; the which, having accomplished, he would happily descend again to pandemonium. At this, we say, we were at first inclined to cavil, but subsequent events showed how weak were our objections; for Daintree,

having carefully mastered the morning signal, succeeded in giving vent to that most necessary "open sesame," so effectively, that the lady's hand received its salute before the owner of that hand had left the lower regions. Now, it might be safely conjectured that the lady, knowing her "hubby's" impulsive nature, would imagine, should the signal again draw her from her bed, that her darling had returned for *another* soft pressure; and, indeed, it was with the idea of thus escaping detection that the festive Francis had taken his kiss, never even thinking of one certain reason for instant discovery. The salute, we doubt not, quite equalled, if it did not surpass, her husband's in fervour; *but* was wanting, *altogether* wanting, in *moustache!* Hence the piercing shriek of Mrs B., the fiery indignation of B., the rightful whistler, the flight of the impostor, Daintree, and this tale of marital imbecility and wifely sagacity to afford amusement and *instruction* for the

whole mess until our arrival at Port Said. What can we say in favour of Port Said?—that great canal weed, that snake in the sand—except that we "coaled" there? Nothing. Each nation's own peculiar vice flourishes; each infamous trade prospers there; and, if we dared, we believe we might describe *new* crimes as practised at Port Said. Interesting and instructive as such descriptions would be, we refrain; but, male reader, if your wife ever excuses your attendance at the social meal, take tea there some day and go the rounds after dark. Take a friend or two with you, carry merely such valuables as you have grown tired of, and write down your experiences if you like.

The Egyptians have a man-of-war there, Ferdinand de Lesseps, a villa, and the inhabitants get their fresh water through long pipes from Ismaila—about forty-five miles off, on the banks of the Canal; it must be nice and cool drinking.

Slip from the buoy, pay the dues, and we start, under the care of a French pilot, into the famous Suez Canal.

It was 6 a.m. when we entered, and not being allowed to proceed at more than five knots an hour, except in the wide lakes, we had no chance of getting through that day.

The wash against the banks, which would be considerable from a big ship going at any great speed, would soon wear them down, and some restriction as to speed is therefore necessary. No ships proceed during the night, except upon special occasions—such as a visit of the Heir Apparent to his future Indian command—but are required to haul alongside one of the "gares," or stations, at which the cutting is wider, to allow two ships to pass one another; and where one of the canal employés is in charge, to see that the regulations are carried out. He has to signal by flags whether the passage to the next

gare is clear or not, and to telegraph to the head offices as each ship passes; so that at both Port Said and Suez, the authorities can always show on their plans with their small models the exact position of every vessel making the passage. After peacefully gliding along, over the first half dozen miles of ditch, we were joined by a young and active pelican, who, well aware of the strict regulations against the use of firearms in the Canal, amused himself by keeping just within easy shot of the eager sportsmen on the poop. Not for a moment did that bird of the wilderness lose its P.M.—presence of mind—not once did it neglect to swallow, with the best of appetites, the ship's biscuit which, for want of stones, was hove at it. Flamingoes we see in thousands! now settled—and seen at our distance—motionless; like a white pebbly beach on the banks of the small lakes far away over the desert—now taking flight, like a pink-lined cloud, to be

lost to view as they sink on to the sand, near some even more distant lake.

On we steam, until we are only a few miles from Lake Timsah. The old *Tigris* has been lucky so far; each of the ships passed, has had to give way to her; but now her turn has come, and, at almost the last "gare" before the lake, we have to stop, and lash to the bank, whilst a homeward-bound steamer goes by with much cheering and shouting, also with an interchange of witticisms and sweet biscuits.

Our pelican having ere this departed, as we suppose, to "bury his head in the sand," or perform some other portion of his well-known programme, we are able to turn our attention to the "ditch" Arab. This majestic creature then, who frequents the banks of the Suez Canal, and runs along abreast the ship for miles, in undress sackcloth, is not a savoury object. One feels no inclination to pet or fondle that child of the desert. He seems to hang about near

the gares, and, of his many guttural noises, one can generally distinguish "ah-right" and "backsheesh." He is singularly filthy; and there is every reason to believe that the caravans, of which we have passed several on their way to Mecca, contain persons of equally majestic foulness. Two long hours we waited at that "gare;" for Second-lieutenant Black, having dug his case of cartridges out of the magazine, had started off for a small lake situated, according to him, about a mile off, and where the ardent sportsman was certain there were wild duck and other luxuries. Armed with gun and carefully-set pedometer — Monkton had *strongly* advised him to take the latter — he trudged on through the fine sand, until the gun began to grow heavy, and the pedometer showed *two* miles. Still the blue waters of the lake rippled along the sand, at about the same distance ahead, and stretched far away to their invisible meeting with the cloudless blue sky; still

Second-lieutenant Black, wondering at the length of the way, but certain of his reward, trudged sinkingly on. He was fully aware that his time on shore was limited to one hour, and that one half of it was gone; but then "those naval fellows always got ready half-an-hour before anything happened, and, if he put on a spurt, he might do this last mile in no time." Accordingly, he spurted, sinking deeply. The gun grew heavier, the pedometer registered $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles, and his watch warned him that in another quarter of an hour his leave would be up. Still the rippling waters, and with them, of course, his certain wild duck, kept their original distance ahead, and, with a malediction on both, Second-lieutenant Black turned himself to the right about, and dropping his eye-glass, commenced an inglorious retreat. All the 1st 160ths wore eye-glasses, and the last joined, or lower fractions, would smile, oh, so cleverly! when you asked them why. But, to join the in-

glorious retreat! It was annoying afterwards to Black to remember, that in giving up the lake and duck hunt, he had crushed and trampled upon his pedometer, and ruined the main-spring of his watch; but doubly trying was it to be met, directly he arrived on board, by a deputation, headed by Monkton, who presented him with his own edition of "The Comprehensive Pocket Dictionary," the page open at "Mir," and the word "Mirage" deeply scored under.

After this last cruel cut, a powerful slanging from Colonel Riling, for having broken his leave, was amusing; and the knowledge that, good-natured as Captain Braddon was, he had almost been persuaded by the colonel to put him under arrest, positively cheered that over-keen sportsman. During his period of optical delusion, the remainder of us had not been idle. We had, in parties, strolled on the sand, climbed the signet staff, fed M. de la Rue's

gazelle, and, the more favoured ones, been introduced to Madame, his wife. *Some* of the favoured ones, however, reaped little benefit from that, for the belle of the desert —and she really was wonderfully fresh and comely—could only speak her own native tongue—Italian. The desperate attempts of the favoured Daintree and Hawthorne to form some sort of combination of the few foreign words they knew, and so to express their admiration, should have moved hearts of stone, but met with no kind of approval or assistance from the ladies of their party. At 4.30 we steamed on again, putting on the speed as much as possible through Lake Timsah, and soon passing Ismaila, with its sprinkling of actually green trees, we tied up for the night at a particularly unwholesome-looking "gare"—different as oasis to desert to the Frenchman's station, with its pretty creepers and plants, and its Italian desert flower—not far from Serapeum, and one of the wretched native villages.

CHAPTER VII.

DINNER was at seven o'clock, and towards 9 p.m., after dance on the poop, nearly "all hands" headed by the skipper, Colonel Riling, and a few of the senior ladies—what skittish young things Mrs. Colonel and Mrs. Major are on board ship—were shoved across in boat loads to the bank, for a long-looked-for-ward-to moonlight walk.

This moonlight ramble in the lone desert had been exercising the mind of the Hon. Francis for hours past; it was quite plain that to enjoy it, as he fully intended to, only *one* lady companion would be desirable; and for some time he could not, for the life of him, make up his mind which to take; lively, clever

Blanche, or confiding, innocent Effie. At last he had decided that most fun was to be obtained from confidence and innocency as embodied in the little Stewart girl; calculating also that although she would certainly go on shore under her mother's care—an incubus which Blanche would be clear of —yet, it was equally certain that Captain Braddon would not be far off, and would take care that that did not amount to much. *But*, how about Blanche? Half expecting to find that Monkton would readily take her off his hands, he found that officer with his *own* little game to play; for—Faulkner being on the sick list —he had promised himself the pleasure of a moonlight stroll and romantic chat over old days with Mrs. Faulkner. Therefore he, Monkton, most emphatically "barred" the sister.

What was to be done? Until just before dinner, Daintree had unceasingly asked himself that question; not until he was

clothed in his clean boiled rag, and ready for the repast, had inspiration seized him. A few days ago, when they had commenced rehearsing a play for performance in the Red Sea, Miss Blanche Dutton, who was one of the performers, had been commissioned by Coxwell—prime mover, manager, king of tragedy, and burlesque — to try and persuade old Dr. Giles to join the theatrical troupe, as one of the parts was supposed to be exactly suited to him ; but she had signally failed in her object, as indeed everyone but herself had expected. The old boy had asked her question after question without waiting for her answers, neither had he attempted to reply to her request. Here was our schemer's chance, and ere seating himself at the dinner table that night, the artful Daintree had, with skilful management, contrived to get a bet on with the defeated young lady—giving her most unconscionable odds—that she would not inveigle Dr. Giles into escorting

her on the evening walk. She, by no means averse to have a try at recovering her reputation as a wheedler, fell into the glove-baited trap readily enough, and Daintree's mind was at ease. Directly a word was spoken about landing, he took upon himself the burden of Miss Effie Stewart's cloak, and Miss Effie Stewart's cloud. Nights in the canal are cold in January — and with her approval and her mother's shawl, he was well on the spot when the first party started.

After scrambling up the steep sand bank, a rest was necessary, and the captain relieved Daintree of Mrs. Stewart's shawl. Pariah dogs are barking around the native village; Effie was young and fond of Francis; Francis was wary and rather liked Effie; Francis and Effie stole away to look for those Pariah dogs in the moonlight.

But long before this Miss Dutton had been scheming.

Seated not far from Dr. Giles, she had,

during dessert, taken care to express a most decided opinion that no babies should be allowed in "Troopers." "Or if"—she heartlessly put it—"*if* we must have the infliction; why not start a baby farm close to the Sheep and Chicken?"

"Eh! why not?" said the pleased doctor. "Why not, eh? Why, because all the ladies, married or single, would be off to the Chicken and Sheep, and then where would young Jackanapes and Co. be? What?"

"All amongst the hay, too," laughed Daintree, who was generally alluded to by the doctor as young Jackanapes, adding, in a low tone to his neighbour, Effie,—"and in clover." "You would soon have the saloon all to yourself, old fellow," he continued, aloud.

"Not if *I* was on board," said Blanche, gaily. "Would you, doctor?" The old boy smiled, thinking that after all there was some right feeling amongst these girls, and

that this one might make a sensible mother some day, if she'd only give up her acting nonsense, and stick to her ideas about babies. Miss Dutton saw the smile, and, having finished her dessert, offered Daintree, in a whisper, to double the bet—an offer which was declined with thanks—and left the table to prepare for her next move.

She quite understood that she need not look for much of her sister Margaret's society that evening, and had persuaded old Major Bolton—one of the widowers—to take charge of her, promising, and *fully intending*, that she would not drag him far.

The major had about half finished his after dinner cigar, when she drew near, and in her most engaging manner said that she was *quite* ready, and was he really *certain* that he did not mind having his smoke on the sand. The major sighed; he couldn't help it. He and the paymaster of the *Tigris*, never tired of

airing their service grievances, had just started a favourite—the absurd way those surgeon fellows in both services were allowed to carry everything before them—and it *was* hard at his—the major's—time of life to be hauled off his hobby by a chit of a girl.

"It is *so* good of you, Major Bolton," said Blanche, as their boat was being pushed over to the bank; "and I know that you are anxious to get back again—Oh, I know you are!" she said, laughingly, as the major murmured something about glorious moonlight night, sand, and exercise. "So," continued she, "I promise that in a very short time you shall be again growling at the British medical profession, and the *British Medical Journal* as much as you please, though what good it will do you I'm sure I don't know."

They reached, and had nearly climbed to the top of the bank, when, with a

little cry of pain, Blanche arranged her garments neatly around her, and sank into a sitting posture upon the sand.

"What is it, my dear Miss Dutton? What *is* the matter?" said the panting major, his cigar gone out, his boots full of sand, and his features now trying to force themselves into an expression of commiseration for the *she* who had been the first cause of all these miseries.

"What *have* you done? What *can* I do?"

"My ankle," murmured Blanche, faintly, as she pressed the neat little joint which, with well fitting cover, just peeped out from under her dress.

"Oh! my ankle," repeated the suffering girl, more faintly, as she leant back upon the sand. "Could you—would you *mind* pulling off my boot, and then going for one of the doctors?"

The major ardently desired to do *anything*; humanity alone demanded that

much; and a pretty foot, neatly shod, always fetched him. He was a widower; he had pulled off ladies' boots before, but never in the lone desert; never, he then thought, from so dainty a tree. Strange to say, it did not appear to be much swollen—but, dainty or not, the colour of the stripes on its outer bark will be remembered by the major until his dying day.

"And now, my dear young lady," he said, as having obeyed the first part of her commands, he still knelt before her, looking at the foot, which lay passively in his hand, and feeling as young as he looked, "you are sure you don't mind being left alone, whilst I run for the doctor?"

Run? Why, poor old boy, he hadn't run for the last ten years. The ankle did it.

Blanche smiled behind her handkerchief—"Oh, I'm not at all afraid, thank you," said she, "and—and major,

remember that I'm not one of the "troops," you know. I suppose I must have one of the naval doctors, must I not?"

"Yes, of course, glad you reminded me; the fleet surgeon, old Giles, will be the man."

Old Giles! Why he was five years younger than the major. The stripes did it—Blanche *laughed* behind her handkerchief. "Keep your spirits up, my dear Miss Dutton," and forgetting grievances, and—until half way down the hill—*gout*, the gallant young widower started back for the ship.

"Where's my wife? you must have seen my wife!" exclaimed a figure, rushing violently against the almost spent major, as he hurried over the gangway.

"Bother your wife, sir," was the satisfactory reply, as the figure was pushed off in the direction of old Giles, who—careful to escape any stray ladies—smoked his

cigarettes anywhere rather than on the poop.

"Bother *you*, sir. What? and—and your wife, sir. Eh! And—and everybody else's wife! What?" burst forth, in impetuous jerks, from the healer of male maladies.

"I beg pardon, I'm sure," said the figure, meekly; "but *have* you seen Mrs. Blake? She promised to walk with no one but me, and I—I can't find her anywhere."

"What? can't find her. Eh? Wears a hat and cloak, doesn't she? What?"

"Yes, yes," said Blake, eagerly; "that's her."

"That's her, is it, eh? Well, if that's her, she went on shore with *Coxwell* in the first boat. Better ask him about her, eh?"

The subaltern gasped, opened a wide field for remarks to the recording angel, and was off like a rocket. "But if that girl was your wife I'll—go in for matrimony; eh, major?" The doctor grinned venomously. He knew that Mrs. Blake

had left the gangway, and returned to the ladies' cabin only a few minutes before, feeling faint; and that no one had thought of telling her noodle of a husband.

"Take time to think about it, young Headstrong. Don't do things rashly, impetuous youth," laughed the major. "But come along, doctor," he continued, "I have a job for you." And Giles found himself button-holed to the shore, Bolton rapidly telling him about Miss Dutton's ankle. A lady's sprained ankle was a slight change for a naval doctor, but it did not arouse old Giles' enthusiasm, and he only grew slightly interested on discovering that the accident had happened to the sensible girl who wished to have the saloon nursery abolished. That was a happy idea of Miss Blanche's!

Weary and blown, they soon stood before the still recumbent, graceful figure of Miss Dutton. No handkerchief hid her face now, no absence of colour was observable

in her blooming cheeks. No! Her little game now is quite "*une autre chose.*"

"I *am* so sorry," she began, before either of them had found breath for aught but gasps. "I think it could only have been a little crick after all; and I have given you so much trouble, doctor." She smiled sweetly on the doctor; the major was *nowhere.* "And you can't think how nervous I am"—Blanch Dutton nervous!—"especially, about sprains. But it seems quite right again now, don't you think so?" and, with virginal diffidence, the stripes just showed again, appealing this time to the *doctor's* sympathy.

In ten minutes more, the maiden was leaning on the ancient bachelor's arm; "just to try, you know" if she could walk without pain as far as that stone cistern, unused since the canal workmen had finished their labours.

In ten minutes more, the widowered major was astonishing and annoying his

friend the paymaster by growling out, as the latter concluded a statement that "possibly there were one or two questionable characters amongst naval paymasters" —"They're all alike, sir! humbugs. Each generation commences earlier, too! all alike! all alike!" The paymaster showed signs of annoyance at this perfectly gratuitous insult, but I quite forget how he and the major came to an understanding, and no one ever heard what the doctor said to the damsel, or the damsel to the doctor, as they strolled along lovingly together. I say *lovingly* on the authority of Hawthorne, who, as military captain of the day, and a fixture on board accordingly, had, with the aid of night-glasses, observed Miss Dutton manœuvring the old doctor, and, not knowing the prize in view, had pitied her taste. "Surely she might have found one of 'Purs' more to her fancy," thought the gallant captain, re-adjusting his eye-glass. (Have I mentioned that the 160th all wore eye-

glasses). "Pretty Polly Maxwell would have more sense, wouldn't she?" he whispered, as one of the sergeant-major's daughters passed close by him on her way down below. The girl smiled and blushed, and would have stopped—as she had often done before, and would again—to talk to an officer; but mamma—*mother* is so common—was in rear, and there were no warm kisses or compliments for Miss Polly *that* evening.

Hawthorne's statement, notwithstanding, I don't believe that even during that remarkable stroll old Giles said much. It is possible that his feelings overcame him. No woman's foot had pressed his hand, no lady's weight had needed his support for some time, and there was *life* in the old boy yet. *Undoubtedly*, his feelings overcame him.

* * * *

"I think that I may say with Shakespeare's Earl of Warwick—

> Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye,
> I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgment.

But then, Mrs. Faulkner, who has not? Since you went in for matrimony, I'm afraid I have grown callous; I spoon anyone who will flirt with me. What can it matter, since you are out of the question?" The speaker was Monkton; his voice and half-joking tones reaching the doctor and the maiden from the far corner of the cistern.

Mrs. Faulkner's answer came before they were seen. "Why should I be out of the question?" she said, impatiently. "That is, of course, you couldn't—you wouldn't care, and of course, I couldn't *allow* you to flirt with me now. But it's not altogether pleasant for one to have to hear pretty speeches made to other girls which one once believed to—to—"

"Now, Maggie! Ah, Mrs. Faulkner, you know that you never believed a word that I told you, you often said so," interrupted Monkton, laughingly. And determined to

put a stop to the "romantic chat over old days" before it grew even more interesting, he jumped up from his dust coat, on which they had both been sitting, and was about to propose a move onwards again, when the other couple came in sight, and the doctor—who had overcome his late feelings, and was engaged in an argument with the cistern—was heard to mutter: "Married as well as single, eh? Young fools as well as old fools, eh? *Bound* to be fooled somehow! What?" This remark failing to meet with any response, a slight pause ensued; then the old fellow, once more awakened to a sense of enmity against the fool-making sex, handed his fair charge politely over to Monkton, and surmising, with all his accustomed acerbity, "that he must go and see his sick, eh? Great pity, wasn't it, eh?" he left Blanche to explain how she had managed to get him there, and was off.

Blanche and Cecil laughed merrily as she

explained about the bet, and how she had won the gloves. "And you shall have three pair, Maggie, if you like," she added, as a sop to her sister, who, she was afraid, was far from pleased at a third person's arrival on the scene. Mrs. Faulkner was certainly a little sore. She had accused Cecil of forgetting their old friendship in new flirtations, and he had laughingly offered to become her bond-slave, provided Major Faulkner had no objection. How could he (Cecil) be so absurd? And she had really imagined at one time that he cared for her, and had fondly hoped that he would be broken-hearted when she married. There was the rub. She had not made his whole life miserable by her marriage. It *was* annoying!

Blanche felt in the way, and being unable to get out of it alone, proposed that they should stroll towards the village. They did so—rather dismally, and soon came across Mrs. Stewart and the captain; the former

in a great state of anxiety about her darling Effie, having just discovered that she had not seen her for some little time — *i.e.*, roughly, *two hours*.

Captain Braddon, with the assistance of the rather dismal trio, succeeded in allaying the anxious mother's fears, assuring her that Miss Stewart was being taken the greatest possible care of, and they all repaired on board. Mrs. Stewart could not think of going to bed until her daughter had returned; so, accompanying herself upon the guitar, the lady warbled love songs in the shadow of the ever-useful wheel-house, and the gallant captain provided iced drinks. She sang charmingly, and he dearly loved the guitar; neither of them had time to think that Effie might be even then learning —her first great lesson—the world!

* * * *

The pariah dogs still barked—as was their nightly custom—but little recked the pair who, far from the native village, rested

their backs adjacently against the wall of a tumble-down structure, which had once been inhabited by an overseer of canal cutters.

Near them, the only sign of wakeful life, was a camel, hobbled, and squatted on the sand, with neck well stretched out. A sudden rumbling sound would occasionally inform them that the animal was engaged in the parsimonious pursuit of chewing the cud, and the supercilious "who-the-devil-asked-you" sort of look which his long face bore when shoved in their direction, indicated, plainly, that he could tell "the distinguished foreigner" at a sniff.

The driver lay curled up on his mat just in front of the beast. He had stirred slightly when the pair had arrived, and taken up their adjacent position; then, murmuring "Salaam, Backsheesh," had gone to sleep again immediately. It *was* his destiny. They might almost have supposed that their arrival had been altogether unknown to him, but ever and anon, as the camel's restless

neck tautened the rope in his hands, a drowsy "Backsheesh, Sahib," showed that, even in his dreams, the desert child had not forgotten the monied white man.

Is it necessary to add that the pair in close proximity and deep thought were the dog-finders, Francis and Effie? He, at all events, was thinking deeply, and *she* was thinking that *he* was thinking of *her*.

"How very thoughtful we are, all of a sudden," said she, gaily, and waited for the compliment which *should* come.

"Yes; I was just making up a little poem, suggested by past events and present noises," said Daintree.

"Oh! Is that all?" said she.

"Yes. It runs like this," said he.

I thought that into the "Blue Bell" *
Yet once again I'd stumbled;
"'Ow'rd 'arris will oblige," I yell—
That is—the camel *rumbled.*

Methought in trop'cal waters, I,
To have a swim had tumbled:
That fin! a shark! Oh Lord, I cry—
That is—the camel *rumbled.*

* South of England music hall at Portsmouth.

I thought 'twas my first watch, about
The bridge I tramped, and grumbled:
That sound! "man overboard," I shout—
That is—the camel *rumbled.*

Methought I stood on Plymouth Hoe;
I'd dined, was somewhat jumbled;
It rose, we met; I heard the blow—
That is—the camel *rumbled.*

Methought I knelt with "sis," so meek,
Our baby prayers we mumbled;
"Boo—oo! she's pinch'd me, ma," I shriek—
That is—the camel *rumbled.*

"What do you think of it?" asked Daintree.

Effie didn't think much of it; she was disappointed. There was nothing about her in it; perhaps he didn't care for her after all.

"You weren't thinking of me, then," she murmured, shyly. "I thought that, perhaps, you might have been—just a little!"

"Oh! wasn't I though? listen to this, my last thought."

Methought at Heaven's garden gate
Two angels met—an assignation.
Two sighs, four lips got mixed, and straight
The camel rumbled approbation.

"There! now I've finished smoking," said

Daintree, chucking away his cigar. "You know what you promised, and, *by Jove*, the camel's rumbling."

A slight pause followed his remark; then came a sound, which even you, most meek and gentle reader, would recognise as entirely distinct from the muttering of a dirty Arab, or the rumbling of a cud-chewing camel.

"Then, you do not mind, do you?"

The question was Daintree's, but did not appear to refer to his having ceased to smoke.

"You are not angry? that's right," he continued, as a red, but smiling, little face was, after some difficulty, again turned towards his.

"You told me that cousin Edward used to, didn't you?" he added, with a laugh.

"Yes, but that was more than a year ago, Mr. Daintree," said Effie, slowly and rather thoughtfully. "When we were children and played croquet for kisses at aunt Emily's, and then he—he *never* put his arm around my waist like you—like *that*. Oh!

you mustn't, Mr. Daintree;" she finished quickly, moving shyly, but certainly not increasing their distance apart; and the enterprising arm gained another inch or two.

"But you do not mind, Effie?" he persisted. "That lucky cousin of yours would do just the same were he here."

"How *can* you say so, Mr. Daintree? I will never forgive you," she said, turning away indignantly. "I'm sure I should not let him."

"But you don't mind with me?" still persisted Daintree. "Let me look at you, Effie." The little, innocent face, grown strangely flushed and timid, was turned slowly to meet his.

"No; not with you," she whispered, her lips raised unconsciously; "you are so—so different." That was it, poor little half-child, half-woman. *He* was so different. The child's thought; the woman's excuse.

Again that sound, and yet the dirty Arab muttered not, the camel forbore to rumble.

Effie leant back once more against her companion's arm.

"Different, am I," laughed he, after that second slight pause. Kissing had always been a laughing matter to him, and to the girls he had kissed. What could he know of such simplicity as Effie Stewart's?"

"Different, am I," he repeated, bending his arm and drawing the slight, yielding little figure closer yet. "Then, won't you," and he raised his lips, jokingly, "won't you mark the difference?"

"No I mustn't; you mustn't, Mr. Daintree." The nervous and now almost womanly tone of entreaty was unnoticed by him.

"Nonsense, Effie," he laughed, still enjoying the joke.

"But you mustn't, Mr. Daintree; you must not; I can't, I can't *bear* it. I'm sure I shall cry; Oh, don't! I *know* I shall." The kiss, with a jovial laugh, was given, and the hot, soft little cheek, to Daintree's

utter surprise, still rested against his, and a quick, nervous sob told plainly that the joke was over for them both.

"Oh! you shouldn't, I'm sure it is wrong, and I can't help it," sobbed poor Effie, half frightened at her own feelings, and now experiencing all a woman's shame at having shown them.

"But, I say, you know, don't cry, Effie; I'm sure it's all right, that is, there was nothing wrong. Don't, please don't cry; "crying, class three, *feeble*," stammered Daintree, fairly puzzled how to explain himself. He couldn't tell the girl that he was devilish sorry, but didn't know that she was so fond of him, as she too evidently was; and it also struck him rather forcibly *now*, that, considering her childishness, he had very much overdone the business.

Silently and disconsolately he looked at her, as she quietly removed his arm from her waist, and said, with the least suspicion of bitterness—the "learning the world" had

commenced—"Of course there was nothing wrong. You will be afraid to ever kiss another, Mr. Daintree." She laughed merrily, and jumped to her feet. He should see that it was merely a little sudden nervousness that had so moved her, nothing else. She was only a child, and in no way malicious. Daintree's "cut one" had not been guarded. A *woman* is always at the first guard. The late scene was not likely to be forgotten by either of them, but an hour in the moonlight will work wonders, and they were both jolly, and *almost* at their ease again when at 11.30 p.m. they followed the sound of the guitar, and Daintree handed his fair, awakened little friend into her mother's keeping. It was at 11.30 too, that some of the lively ones, headed by Coxwell, Mrs. Bartram, and satellites, "took boat," and started for a steamer which lay lashed to the bank some distance astern of the *Tigris*.

They would paddle quietly down to her,

" their voices keeping tune as their oars kept ti-i-ime," as the glee hath it. Then they would go on board, have a cozy little chat with the passengers, possibly meeting old friends, assuredly obtaining cheap drinks and tobaccos; and then they would glide gently back again to their Eden on the *Tigris*. Such were the thoughts which had struck Coxwell and a limited number of the " brutal and licentious soldiery "—historical term of endearment—on their return from exploring the native village.

Mrs. B. and the little widow of lofty aspirations were the only sopranos in the gleeful party. The lengthy object of the latter lady's " pretty little ways " was there —the lazy object of the former lady's wifely duty was *not* there. He and " old Jinks," with the assistance of a rapidly diminishing supply of whisky (Scotch), and by the light of the solitary lantern, were demoralising in the saloon; the question raised by " Jinks " being, whether " A sojer who gets

marr'd, ought'n t'be kicked out of all decen' s'ciety?" whilst Bartram, feeling that he had already committed himself, proposed the comfortable doctrine that, "S'posen a f'low could'n help'n self; had'n he perfec right t'amuse'n self in's own way?" The greatest harmony prevailed; each agreeing thoroughly with the other's sentiments, and —although the way was narrow and tortuous—arm-in-arm, and with much supererogatory dignity, they marched to their cabins, at about the same time as the boat glided in "measured time" towards her destination down the canal.

As she approached the steamer, her occupants had noticed, hanging over the poop rails, a pair of white trousers—with human legs in them; a lank, slack pair of legs, of considerable length, it being impossible to see whence they sprung. Now, as they neared the ship's side, a head suddenly appeared peering between the legs, in such a way that, had not its equally

sudden disappearance been immediately followed by the withdrawal of the legs, no one could have supposed them members of one body. The boat ran alongside right underneath the rails on which the trousers had been hanging, and the single proprietor of the connected members appeared.

A tall, limp, melancholy man he was, as, leaning his elbows upon the rails, he regarded the boat-load wonderingly.

An immeasurably long cigar protruded from his mouth, and evidently—to his mind—life was too short, or the baccy too good to admit of his pausing to remove it from his lips for the simple purpose of conversation.

"Oh, crimes!" was his first surprised exclamation. "Now wot in the name of all that is spirituous brings *you* here?" was his first question, asked very much as though he had recognised an old chum in the boat. They all looked at him intently, but with no signs of ancient friendship; then

they looked at one another, and a short pause ensued.

"*Drinks*," abruptly and hoarsely ejaculated the long subaltern. His stowage room was enormous, and he had been pulling the stroke oar.

The two sopranos, with one accord, softly, musically murmured, "*Hush!*"

"Have you any lady passengers?" inquired the little common herbage widow, in a voice of which the natural sweetness was somewhat impaired, in consequence of a vain endeavour on her part to check a second and more hoarse demand from the long subaltern for "*drinks*."

"Yes; we are lady passengers," replied the man, without showing any indication of stirring from his position of 'vantage, or of having heard either of the applications for fluid. An acute observer, indeed, might have noticed that his thin lips closed tighter on his long cigar; an acute listener might have remarked that a muttered "crimes"

proceeded from the beginning of the white continuations, as "*drinks*" fell upon their wearer's ear; but it was late, and our friends were *not* acute.

"Oh, *may* we come on board? I *should* so like to come on board," gushed Mrs. Bartram, in her cheery, loquacious, little voice. The grass widow was fully, but unavailingly occupied in endeavouring to suppress another, and still hoarser, applied for "*Drinks*," from her friend with the vast capacity.

"Yes; you can come on board," said the man, playfully spitting over their boat, and breaking into a dismal smile, as they all shrank close against the ship's side in disgust. "There's no orders against smokin' or spittin' *anyhow*," he remarked, with gloomy satisfaction. "They can't stop *that*, below *me*. *That's* a blessin';" he added, as without removing his "weed," he cleverly caused the pleasure party to shrink together in their boat, and the

dismal smile once more romped unchecked over his cadaverous face.

Failing to see the 'blessin' in the same light, Coxwell said, civilly, "Where is your ladder? we don't see it."

"There *ain't* a ladder," replied the man, more cheerfully than he had yet spoken.

"Well, side ropes, and steps in the ship's side; where are they?"

"There *ain't* no side ropes or steps in the ship's side." And the light of happier, or at least, less melancholy days, rollicked about that man's eyes as the thirsty ones beneath him darted at one another glances of mute appeal.

"Why," he added, in accents of deep scorn, and as if he considered that some sort of apology for his presence in the ship was necessary, "why, you don't think I came here, knowin' wot I do *now*, do you? Oh, crimes! I came aboard at Port Said, and I go ashore directly we get to Suez, *anyhow*."

"But what we want to know is, how on earth *we* are to get on board," said Coxwell, testily, although, in an opposite direction, his capacity was almost as vast as that of the long subaltern; and he, too, craved for drinks.

"Crimes, you *can't* get aboard!" and the melancholy man's "whereabouts" was again indicated only by a couple of fathoms of white trouser material dangling over their heads, and by an obtrusively distinct, "Hah! ha!" which accompanied the disappearance of his upper works.

"But you said we might come on board, and the ladies are waiting," remonstrated Brown, the gunner, indignantly, glancing towards Mrs. Bartram for approval.

"That's right, Mr. Brown; put it down to us. Say it's the ladies, *do*," snappishly replied his admired. What cheeriness could stand such repeated and overwhelming shocks? Jones, the sapper, made the running for the remainder of the evening

"Ho, ho! The *ladies* want drinks, eh? Ha, ha! How do they like that?" A hand was thrust out between the overhanging legs, and a plentiful supply of cold tea fell into the water only just clear of them. "We 'ave lots of that; I'll lower some down in a bucket if you like. Ha, ha!"

"Confound you," roared Coxwell; "what are you blattering about?"

"Don't see the joke, eh? *Crimes!* Why you've come for *drinks*, I reckon, 'aven't you?" The head wearing a fresh, and even longer growth of weed, and a smile of ineffable joy, again peered inquiringly at them between the rails and the legs.

"Thanks. Whisky and soda 'll do for me, and——" Thus far, in muffled tones, broke forth the long subaltern, and then his small chum's hand closed his lips relentlessly.

"Don't see the joke, eh? Why, you've come—ha, ha!—you've come for drinks to a—oh, crimes!—to a *teetotal* ship!" The

legs, the rails, the very *side* shook, as yell after yell of fiendish laughter burst from the again invisible head.

Despairing looks passed over the hitherto eager, expectant faces of the pleasure and drink seekers, and then—shaking the water off his boathook at that unproductive vessel—the bowman shoved off, the crew gave way together, and in five seconds they were clear of the temperance abode. Not a second too soon, for another ejected blessing narrowly missed them. Coxwell, in a hollow voice, caused by a partial vacuum in the organ of digestion, denounced that man as a "slave and outcast;" and would have stood up to shake a fist at him—or rather, at his legs—but was forcibly restrained by Mrs. B. and admirers, they being unanimously of opinion that his great weight, and position on one side of the boat, rendered such a course as he proposed particularly inexpedient.

He contented himself then with con-

cluding his harangue with as much dignity as is attainable by a man upon whose right arm hangs a lady, and upon each of whose legs hangs a gentleman, in the following powerful and prayerful language:—

"And may you *founder*, *sink*, and be d——"

"*Drowned*," interposed the appendage to his right arm, but not in quite her cheery way. "Drowned, Mr. Coxwell," she repeated, softly, "nothing farther."

"*Drunk*. Must—be—*drunk*," decided the long subaltern, in four distinct, spasmodic jerks; and was immediately taken in hand by his protectress. At this period, his head and shoulders were alone visible in the moonlight; his protracted remainder had gradually subsided, and now lay coiled down, in separate lengths, at the bottom of the boat. It was hard to move without trampling upon a coil of him.

"And be drowned then!" shrieked Coxwell.

"Same to you, old *elephantiosis*," floated back the mirthful rejoinder from the vicinity of the dangling legs. After that it became very difficult to restrain the ardour of the Thin 'un; nothing but one forcible consideration, suggested by Jones, the sapper, prevented his returning to scale that vessel's wooden side, and immolate that villainous, soured joker; and that was, that whereas in the *Tigris* there were *drinks*, in the villain's vessel there were none.

Untunefully and untimefully, they pulled back; satisfied their cravings, found their cabins—with the exception of the long subaltern, who was discovered next morning stretched out with wide-open mouth under the tap in the ladies' bath room—and retired to rest.

At 6 A.M. on the following day we were off again, and passing through the Great and Little Bitter lakes, arrived at Suez about noon.

After a short stay—no one landing—we

entered the gulf of Suez, and so into the Red Sea, which our sporting friend, Black, expected to find, "Not *red*, you know; that's all humbug; but a sort of *chocolate* colour. Monkton told me so."

Plenty of theatrical rehearsals, and popular songs and readings passed away the time in the Red Sea, and, after a few days, we steamed by that choice island, Perim; struggled against a strong head wind through the "Gate of Tears," and found ourselves in the Arabian Sea, Aden rapidly fading away in the distance.

CHAPTER VIII.

"NOW *do* keep still, or I shall run a hair-pin into you. Maggie, draw the curtain. That's right; now those pins. How do you like that?" triumphantly ended Mrs. Stewart.

The person asked for an opinion, who was standing helplessly on a chair, turned round, and glanced towards the looking-glass.

"Yes; the hair's all right. But I shall look most awfully—what-d'ye-call-it?—flat; shan't I? Excessively straight, and yet too *unstaid!* Class, *angular*, eh?"

"Oh! we'll manage all that," laughed Mrs. Stewart; "and if you will say such stupid things, Mrs. Faulkner will go away, and I can't stop here all alone."

We have dropped promiscuously into Daintree's cabin, and precious little room there is for us.

In the middle of the far from spacious boudoir, the solitary chair is planted; and upon it is placed a lay figure, representing, at present, a startling combination of "Morgiana" in a Turkish bath, and Lieut. Daintree in slight undress. Hovering around, armed with *safety* pins—by the figure's express stipulation,—ribbons, laces, and many other articles of female adornment, are Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Faulkner. No chance of getting near enough to assist in the dressing; many-coloured, neat-folded mysteries surround us, as we find a resting place upon the bed.

"For mercy's sake, don't forsake me!" implored the lay figure, in answer to Mrs. Stewart's threatened departure; "consider my unprotected position, and be kind, even *gentle* with me."

"Well, don't be absurd." And with

keen enjoyment on the part of the ladies, the luckless "combination" is twisted and tortured, and the "Morgiana" portion rapidly predominates.

"Now, you must remember exactly how everything goes on," casually remarks Mrs. Stewart.

An imbecile smile flits across "Morgiana's" sweet young face; a despondent sigh bursts from Lieutenant Daintree's manly bosom, and combined movements of despair convulse the whole figure.

"But you really must," continues Mrs. S.; "for you have to change very quickly to-night. Now then." And taking up one of the mysterious garments from the bed, she held it towards Daintree, whose natural instinct led him to raise his foot to put through it. Both ladies blushed together slightly, and laughed together a good deal. It seemed to be arranged between them that they should act propriety for one another; accordingly, as a general rule,

they came in together, blushed, laughed, and went away together. Both ladies then blushed, and laughed *together;* Mrs. Stewart explaining, after recovery, that it was found more convenient by persons of "Morgiana's" sex to place the *head* through garments of that description, allowing them to slip down into position.

Daintree muttered that he ought to have known better by this time—a remark which certainly called for no reply from the ladies—and, except that he objected strongly to everything fastening behind, and "couldn't see the object of it," petticoats and skirts were placed with little difficulty.

"Mrs. Bartram has lent me her red stockings," said Mrs. Stewart.

Daintree and herself had made a voyage of discovery round the poop on the previous day, and had found that the lady mentioned was the only one who wore the necessary colour.

"And the quartermaster's wife has lent you her shoes," added Mrs. Faulkner.

"Ought to be able to *swim* in anything that belongs to her," observed the fair "Morgiana," with lady-like asperity.

"You'll find them very nice, you dreadfully conceited young woman. You see, it's rather a ticklish business asking the young ladies to lend their shoes to a man; looks as if one knew that they had big feet, you know."

"Besides," said Mrs. Stewart, "you must not be so ungrateful; they are not the *only* things which she has kindly supplied."

Both ladies blushed slightly, laughed a good deal, and glanced towards a more than ordinarily mysterious parcel on the bed.

A fear of the consequences of trying to get down, and the certainty of being unable to get up again in her present rig, combined to keep "Morgiana" on her perch, and away from that mysterious parcel.

"Are you sure you can remember how it all goes on?" again demanded Mrs. Stewart, as strings were untied, pins extracted, and it became evident that ere long Lieutenant Daintree would appear again.

The transitory "Morgiana," after a final struggle with her "body," and an awe-stricken glance at the many things she had slipped out of, expressed Francis Daintree's opinion that, considering the intricate and delicate nature of the materials from which "Morgiana" had to be constructed, it would be well if some more experienced fabricator than himself should superintend the putting on. "For," as he very rightly added, "it isn't as if the get up would admit of a chamois leather suit, or a princess robe only; and it wouldn't do, you know, to have the skirt on hind part before or to forget one's panier."

The ladies decided, with a little mutual blush, that either mistake would be *most*

improper, besides *utterly ruining* the play; so Mrs. Stewart agreed to run down during the performance of "A Turkish Bath," and see that "Tom Griggs" was transformed into "Morgiana" correctly.

"I shan't be able to come, because I am 'Amelia,'" said Mrs. Faulkner.

"Never mind, my dear," whispered Mrs. Stewart; "we will drop the proprieties just for one evening; I shall think he's my boy Hugh; he's not much older, and rather more boyish."

"Don't make 'Morgiana' jealous," laughed Daintree; whispering in an apartment eight feet by six feet, may be considered as practically useless.

"Now, you had better try on the stockings, and see if they will do;" and the ladies retired together into the saloon.

They were still giggling softly, as ladies will, over the amusing little incidents in the milinery department, when the curtain of No. 6 cabin was drawn a little aside, and

Daintree's head appeared. "I say," he began; "it's all very well, you know, but I haven't got any ——"

"Yes, yes; we know," interrupted Mrs. Stewart, waving him back, and re-entering the boudoir with Mrs. Faulkner, where they found Daintree sitting on the end of his bed, a picture of red-legged disconsolateness.

"I tried tying them up with string, but it wasn't comfortable," he murmured, swinging his gorgeous extremities dejectedly. "How you ladies—what I mean is—I must have *something*, mustn't I?"

The ladies agreed that it would be well that he should have something, blushed together, and consulted in whispers; whilst Daintree sat and nursed one of his harmonies in red.

"But I don't wear them, my dear," whispered Mrs. Stewart.

"Nor I, dear," whispered back Mrs. Faulkner.

"*Wonderful* persons," whispered Daintree; "class (a) intensive." The ladies blushed together, and continued their conversation *aloud.*

"I know Mrs. Blake does, and *she* won't mind lending them; but you must be prepared to fight her husband, Mr. Daintree."

"Fight a man for his wife's—a—Honi soit qui mal-y-*pense?*" All right. Heaven defend the right. Class (devout) "Dieu et mon droit."

The ladies smiled, and were again retiring together, when Daintree touched Mrs. Stewart's arm.

"Just one more delicate question. How about my—a—concerning the *figure*, you know?"

"Why, surely you have not forgotten the mysterious parcel," said Mrs. Stewart. He had, though; and the ladies smiled, blushed, and escaped together, as he hastily opened it. "Morgiana's" figure was universally admired that evening.

Then came the last rehearsal, in the Captain's cabin, when Blanche was certain that as "Kate," in "Perfection," she would never be able to look at "Charles Paragon"—Captain Hawthorne—without laughing; although she failed to see, and was rather indignant at someone suggesting that there was anything for *him* to laugh at when on his knees before her, in their love scene. Lieutenant Blake, also, attending to explain nervously to Coxwell, that he did not think the remark "Sam"—Daintree—had to make to "Susan"—Mrs. Blake—about the latter being "pretty straight on her pins" was at all proper, that remark was modified to meet the husbandly fancy, at which Blake was pleased. He looked puzzled, though, when Daintree took him aside, and whispered, feelingly, "By Jove, old fellow, I'm awfully sorry. She *looks* all right, and *walks* well, so I suppose you don't worry yourself much about it; so sorry; who'd have thought it?" and "Sam" cast a

glance of the deepest commiseration towards "Susan," who could never have heard what he was saying, as, of course, she was not intended to; but who, for once, was regarding her adored husband with actual contempt.

Naturally, none of the performers knew their parts; and equally, of course, they were *certain* to be perfect by the evening.

"Old Jinks," the heavy father of the stage, was rather annoying, in that he would persist in denouncing, in loud and somewhat free asides, the ancient baronet he was representing, as a "d——d old fool! drivelling old idiot!" etc. This was rather annoying. Mrs. Faulkner, too, as "Amelia" in "A Turkish Bath," found it a little trying, that in her interview with "Augustus," that gentleman considered *acting* at rehearsals "great rot;" wouldn't practice stage embraces; and gabbled through his part like a parrot. She couldn't *insist* upon the embrace; this was a little trying, but it passed off very

well in the evening—looked so *real*, the ladies said. Perhaps it *felt* so.

An artful arrangement of tubs and mess stools, on one side of the poop, formed the stage; lots of flags, lanterns, and chairs, and a limited supply of scenery and stage effects completed the theatre; each cabin became its owner's green room.

Dinner over in the saloon, the band played a selection; and at eight o'clock blue-jackets and soldiers were let loose upon the poop, and swarmed wherever they could find sitting, standing, or hanging room.

The sergeant-major's lady, in her best gown; the quartermaster-sergeant's lady and the schoolmaster's lady, in their best gowns, sweep past Mrs. Corporal Macpherson and Mrs. Bombardier O'Flynn to their places in the front unreserved seats. Miss Polly is there, giggling and blushing, in Maltese filigree ear-rings, and sailor's hat with "Tigris" ribbon, a tribute of

admiration from the ship's steward, who has manœuvred to sit next her. Pretty Polly was sorely tempted to decorate herself with certain more expensive ornaments, that Mrs. Sergeant-Major, her mamma, knew not of, but was afraid of awkward questions; though what was the harm of presents? and it was so nice to be treated like a lady; so different, too, to those stupid great sergeant's manners.

A stir amongst the officers who are standing lounging about the chairs, and the captain enters with Colonel and Lady Riling, Mrs. Stewart and several other ladies. They all take seats in the front row, and the remaining places are soon occupied. The merry jest and sparkling repartee are bandied amongst the officers; the shrill whistle of the "gods" finds favour amongst the men.

Below, in the saloon, a few tittering servants hang about the pantry to give such

effervescent assistance as may be required by nervous performers. Cabin curtains are perpetually agitated, as half-dressed low comedy bolts out to borrow a pin from tragedy next door, or our "first walking gentleman," who has much to put on and nothing to say, finds stimulant necessary. Especially numerous and rapid are the disappearances into green room No. 3; fearful and wonderful are the changes wrought there; unknown and mysterious are the faces which reappear from behind that impenetrable curtain; for there presides, in the gorgeous Oriental costume of "Mahomet-Ali-Khan-Badoura," alias "Bill Spriggs," Turkish bath proprietor, Coxwell, the thin 'un, lieutenant royal navy, beautifier, vilifier, decrepitudinizer, and general "maker up" of old men and maidens, villains and heroines. The first bell rings as Dr. and Mrs. Adams, apparently awakened to the fact that something is *going*, or about to go *on*, appear at the side of the stage.

Captain Braddon's low voice is wafting soothing trifles into Mrs. Stewart's nearest "pink shell," and the arrival of the *head* of the army medical department and—her husband—is unnoticed by him now, as her existence had before been forgotten.

The colonel notices, though. He knows the "marching lady" by this time; has thoroughly mastered each of her little idiosyncrasies; well understands her amiable foibles; and as Dr. Adams pauses at the end of the front row, he nudges the worthy captain.

Too late! too late! the pause is short. Mrs. Surgeon-General is a lady of determination; Mrs. Surgeon-General knows what is due to *herself*, the army medical department, and the surgeon-general, her husband; and ere the captain has discovered that a heinous crime has been committed, an outrageous offence perpetrated, and, no seats been kept in the front row for the "wife of the surgeon-

general" and Dr. Adams, that distinguished couple of exalted relative rank have left the theatre, rather than submit to the indignity of a back row.

Dear old Braddon, than whom a kinder hearted fellow never drank a "six beller," took the trouble to follow, and try to persuade them to come back, but with no effect, and on his return the performance commenced.

"Where all acquitted themselves so admirably, we feel that it would be invidious to, etc., etc.;" you know how it runs. It is likely that you have seen amateur theatricals *once* or *twice;* it is by no means improbable that you are aware of a latent theatrical genius lurking about your own modest frame; but it is absolutely certain that you would find a description of that entertainment tedious; so we will be merciful, and merely remark, in the usual way, that "the curtain fell amid the well-earned plaudits of a delighted audience."

Quarter-past eleven, and a splendid night; when Daintree—once more clothed respectably, and in his ordinary mind—found himself strolling on the site of the late theatre, between Mrs. Faulkner and her sister Blanche, endeavouring—as *they* were also—to get cool.

"Poor Cecil was quite out of the fun," he remarked, vigorously waving his fan.

"Is he still on that tiresome watch?" asked Mrs. Faulkner.

"Yes; and I have to relieve him at midnight, so shall not get any sleep until 4.0 a.m. Every third '4 hours' watch' is an awful grind, and in a 'trooper' it's precious slow; nothing to do."

"I suppose he is—by himself," observed Mrs. Faulkner, meditatively. She had not paid much attention to the last part of Daintree's growl, and had not heard Blanche's gentle, "poor fellow!" at the end of it.

"Who? Cecil?" said Daintree. "Oh

yes, he is by himself, unless he has the military officer of the watch up there, to keep him company." The "*poor fellow*" escaped unconsciously from Mrs. Faulkner this time; but Daintree's thoughts were wandering, and Blanche was out of hearing.

Major Faulkner had turned in, and probably imagined that his wife had done likewise.

"What a glorious night it is!" continued Maggie. "It seems quite a shame to go to bed." And a couple of wakeful eyes wandered away towards the figure of the officer of the watch tramping up and down in the distance.

"Then, don't be shameful," said Daintree, promptly. "Come on the bridge. Monkton can bring you back when he goes off watch at twelve o'clock."

"It's dreadfully late," feebly objected Mrs. Faulkner. "What do you think, Blanche, dear?"

What Mrs. Faulkner wished was pretty

evident; and Blanche, expressing her willingness to stand on the bridge till midnight, or even longer, they marched forward in single file along the narrow passage by the womens' part of the deck.

"The married women have all gone to bed now, or ought to have," said Daintree; "but it's grand sport coming along here sometimes. You walk along just before sunset! Each married man is seated at a highly respectable distance from his wife, and both of them are playing, oh, so fondly, with the baby. You stroll along quietly an hour later, the sun having withdrawn his rays in the interval. The babies have disappeared, goodness only knows how, or where, and the amount of obstruction caused by male arms thrown across the rails, and supporting female heads, is prodigious, the osculatory noises are deafening. By Jove, there's someone at it now! Halloh there! Why it's—oh! Good night, good night," he broke off, hurriedly, as a figure

started up on the other side of the rails and ran quickly by them, giving them barely time to recognise pretty Miss Polly.

The military officer of the watch was not on the bridge, and Monkton told him that that gallant personage had not reported his "rounds" for the last hour. Neither of them said that they knew why, but they thought that they did, or that at all events *Polly* might have a notion. Poor Polly! Ornaments from "our young officers" may be very nice, but may be too dearly purchased. Kissing may grow *tame*.

On the bridge the ladies chatted away merrily, and the men smoked, chatting likewise. One might be led to infer from this that they all chatted together; but it was not so. Mrs. Faulkner and Monkton chatted whilst Monkton smoked on the port end of the bridge; and Blanche and Daintree chatted whilst Daintree smoked on the starboard extremity. Vi Ormby might have won her bangles that night—you remember

her bet with Daintree that he would be engaged before reaching Bombay?—but for the innocent, and confiding, but very *disturbing* element on board the ship, in the form of Miss Effie Stewart, which she had certainly not calculated upon.

A flushed, frightened little face, turning shyly towards him, seemed to Daintree to shut out Blanche, whenever he bent more closely towards her, as they both leant over the bridge rails. Twice, when he made some thoughtless remark to her, she had looked quickly at him as he waited expectantly for her reply; but it was a voice, timid and broken, which, drowning Blanche's merry tones, seemed to answer back, "I'm sure it is wrong, and I can't help it."

Stupid fancies; but they would not be shaken off, and Blanche had twice asked impatiently if it was not nearly twelve o'clock? At last eight bells struck. The military officer of the next—the middle—watch staggered up sleepily, a few minutes

afterwards, to report his men "all correct," and Monkton escorted the ladies below, leaving Daintree to indulge in four hours more of stupid fancies.

CHAPTER IX.

"WHAT time have you drawn in the lottery, Captain Hawthorne?" said Miss Dutton as, a few evenings after the theatrical entertainment, a more than usually smiling throng of messmates took their seats at the table.

This is a great occasion; for the "Officers of the 160 and Drafts" are giving a farewell dinner to the officers of the *Tigris*. By request of the colonel, and to keep up the spirit of the feed, soldiers are occupying the places, generally filled by naval officers, at the heads of the tables. The messman has prepared a most sumptuous repast; liquor is to flow freely, and everyone is to be thoroughly jolly, for this is also

the last night at sea; early to-morrow we expect to anchor off Bombay.

"6.0 to 6.15 p.m.," replied Hawthorne to Miss Dutton's question. "Though certain to win," he continued, "I don't mind letting *you*, and you only, have my ticket at half-price."

"No, thanks," laughed Blanche; "Mr. Daintree and I have gone shares, and intend to win, don't we, Mr. Daintree?"

"I am afraid I must send a fiver to Emanuel," said Daintree, thoughtfully; "but all the remainder shall be spent on useful things, such as fusees, and a wedding ring, and some shoe laces."

The old doctor, who had started bo'dly on a dry champagne—about the only decent drink purchased for troop ships by the mixed—the very much *mixed*—committee of naval and military officers—was now heard to mumble, "D'ye hear the young jack-a-napes? Eh? Paying his debts before he's won the money, and he'll send a fiver to

Emanuel, and buy a wedding ring, will he? What? D'ye hear him? A wedding ring! What?" And having demolished his own and his right hand neighbour's bread, he began an extraordinarily vicious attack upon the crumbs.

"Oh, yes," chimed in Effie, to Blanche's delight, asking the very question she would have put herself had she dared; "and what will you do with the wedding ring, I wonder?"

"*In*deed," sarcastically grumbled the old doctor, in blissful ignorance, thanks to his crumbs, that half a dozen pairs of delighted ears were strained to catch his remarks. "*In*deed! A little unsophisticated pet! Wonders who is to have the wedding ring, eh? Perhaps she'll wonder who's *trying* for it next. Miss 'Sprained ankle and striped stockings' don't wonder much about that, I know! What?"

Blanche felt and looked rather uncomfortable at the latter part of the doctor's

speech; but Effie had *spoken*, and it was Effie, of course, who claimed attention. Poor Effie! It was a shame; everyone else happened to be so quiet; and how could he dare to imagine that she— What *must* they all think? Poor Effie! It was impossible to feel surprised at the withering young ladylike curse, the malignant young ladylike prayer, the dreadful young ladylike language which escaped her, as nervously re-arranging her dinner napkin with tears in her eyes, she muttered, "I do hope and *pray* that you may never, no *never*, find anyone so stupid as to marry you; and I'm *sure* you never will, if you wait till *doomsday*, and I—*hate* you; you *nasty*, MEAN, SPITEFUL old *WRETCH!* I do."

Blanche muttered nothing. She merely made another mental note of the surprising efficacy of a *judicious* display of "Stripes and ankle."

Daintree, with a glance of not unmixed

delight at the fully occupied and unconscious Dr. Giles, said, quietly, "Oh! *I* shall wear the wedding ring, of course. Looks as if one's a widower. Gives a sort of possible father of a family aspect to a fellow."

"It would take a good many wedding rings and unlimited faith to make one believe *you* father of a family," said Monkton.

"I'm afraid it would," agreed Daintree, sadly. "But fusees and shoe laces don't cost much as a rule, so there'll be enough money left for an whole cargo of wedding rings, and surely some persons will believe that I was once sufficiently presentable to get a girl to marry me, and take me away for a honeymoon, and——"

"Commit suicide, and leave you a widower the moment the sweetness was expended, and she found you out," concluded Monkton, amidst a general laugh.

"*Ah!* If they'd only *always* do that!

Eh?" muttered the old doctor, softly rubbing his hands together beneath the table. And carried away by the bare possibility of such a grand consummation of the honeymoon, he added, aloud, with a roguish look at Blanche, "Worse things than matrimony, eh, Miss Dutton? For all of us. What?" The old boy chuckled, and caught the eye of the waiter with the "dry." He was getting very lively, was old Giles; so was Major Bolton; so was "old Jinks"; so were the more frolicsome ladies, in their airy, ladylike way; so were all the dwellers in "Pandemonium," who seated at a side table, and presided over, "positively for this night only," by the junior subaltern, were evidently going to "go it."

Too hot for anyone to be particularly hungry, on this special occasion, all did their duty unflinchingly, and as the joints appeared the conversation waned considerably.

It was about an hour later on in the

evening, and immediately after a gazelle-like contortion of Mrs. Stewart's, by which she contrived to eat a cherry over her left shoulder from the end of a fork carried round her back in her right hand—an evolution which Mrs. Bartram convulsively endeavoured to imitate—that Colonel Riling rose, amid general acclamation to propose the toast of the evening: "Health and speedy promotion to the officers of the *Tigris*." He was what they call a good after-dinner speaker, and Captain Braddon fairly blushed at his own good qualities, as discovered or invented, and enthusiastically expatiated upon by the colonel.

"Rule Britannia," thundered the band just outside the doors of the saloon. All the soldiers stood to drink, and as the grand old air was finished, a ringing cheer, led by the colonel, burst from them.

No sooner had the "One more!" "Again so!" died away, than "Old Jinks," in a key of surpassing height, and in tones of the

deepest despondency, commenced — or, rather, was surprised in the middle of— "For they are joll' goo' fellows;" neither did a general shout of laughter have other effect than to make that most senior and gallant commander of a company carefully adjust his eye-glass—have I mentioned that all the 160 wore eye-glasses—? and re-commenced his supernatural noises. He seemed pained, however, when Major Bolton, who sat near, asked if someone would not tell the old idiot to shut up, but regained his composure, and pitched his mere personal feelings overboard, and his voice in a somewhat lower tone of despondency, as "So say all of us," started afresh by Hawthorne, rang through the saloon in an attainable key. The captain returned thanks for the officers and himself in a short, hearty speech, and, as he concluded by proposing the health of the military officers on board, the band struck up "The British Grenadiers."

At the captain's proposal, the few naval officers, not more than a dozen, stood on their chairs, giving three cheers, manfully, and "For they are jolly good fellows," lustily. In the musical portion, indeed, they received considerable help from a totally unexpected quarter, for "Old Jinks," having been permitted to join in on the previous occasion, and seeing no reason for remaining silent under existing circumstances, had, with infinite labour, ascended his chair at the same time as Monkton, and now vehemently asserted his conviction that, "They are joll' goo' fellows." Bolton, on the opposite side of the table, having imbibed a sufficiency of champagne, grew so wildly indignant with the doubly elevated songster, towards the end of the last "Hip-pip-ip hooray," that Hawthorne with difficulty prevented his breaking the peace, a wine glass, and "Old Jinks'" head; whilst the doctor, having also imbibed a sufficiency of the same liquid, but with different result,

was so immeasurably tickled at the idea of Old Jinks drinking his own health and singing his own "joll' goo'" praises, that, after two or three struggles to propound a question, which only brought forth "Eh? Ha! He! What?" he pressed one hand to his aching old side, and with the other pointed towards the carolling Jinks, subsided into his chair, and proceeded to choke himself by drinking everybody's health, without further ceremony.

More toasts followed, as others had preceded the two specially noticed; but we may safely draw a veil over all but the one which concerned the fair sex. We dare not let down a lady's veil.

The adjutant then, in glowing terms, proposed "The Ladies! God bless them." He was an engaged man.

With what rapturous applause was the toast received! With what numerous smiles and nods was it drunk! With what rigidly unconscious features did each bachelor, *after*

the hurrahs and table banging, strive to conceal his fear that *he* might be called upon to respond for the blessed ones!

The captain looked anxiously round upon the unmarried *naval* men; the colonel looked anxiously around upon the unmarried *military* men; but all those gallant officers looked as though the task was quite beyond their strength, and as if thoroughly conscious of their inability to talk sufficiently to inspire anyone with the belief that *they*—poor tongue-tied devils—could possibly represent the *Ladies*.

The names of several officers, who, according to the dwellers in Pandemonium, were burning to be heard, were shouted from the side table; but as the men themselves seemed quite content to smoulder away rather than give vent to their internal raging, the "C.O's." remained still anxious and uneasy. It was at this moment of doubt and uneasiness that the colonel, in his present character of messmate and jolly

good fellow, had an idea. It was a grand conception, and, as such, he felt it unnecessary to explain the obvious fact, that merely in his *private* capacity had he conceived and brought it forth. The offspring of his "private capacity" was soon public property. The difficulty was solved, and the ladies, by request of the captain, proceeded to nominate their own champion.

After many whispered consultations and suggestions on the backs of *menus*, their decision was announced, and, amid boisterous applause, the unabashed Daintree stood forth, the chosen champion of the ladies.

"Captain Braddon, Colonel Riling, and officers," he commenced, as soon as the applause had, in some degree, subsided, "of course, I need scarcely tell you that this is the proudest moment of my life, and that this proud moment more than repays me for never having got a wife."

"Oh, it's poetry! I *am* so glad," cried the little grass widow, delightedly.

Daintree, who had made slight pauses after "life" and "wife," looked perfectly innocent of any intentional poetic effusion, but the notion was too good to be overlooked, and the ladies promptly commanded their proud representative to respond in verse.

"Am I the Laureate, that I should overflow with metrical composition at a moment's notice?" demanded Daintree, in helpless tones, but beginning at once to rack his brains for rhymes. Ladies *after* dinner are presumably more reasonable than men, for our female friends did not press the point, and Daintree would have been allowed to finish his speech in prose, had not the unreasoning males decided that poetry *alone* befitted the occasion.

Composition at the table being generally admitted to be difficult, if not impossible, at the ladies' suggestion, and in the hope that the surroundings would cause a flow of the necessary ideas, the poet was con-

veyed to the ladies' cabin, and locked in for a quarter of an hour.

At the end of that time he was triumphantly carried towards his seat by a couple of subalterns, who stood him on the chair, placed the paper containing his poems in his hand, a lady's sun-hat—abstracted from the cabin—upon his head, and withdrew.

Waving unnecessary preamble, the representative thus responded :—

> Obedient ever to angelic cries,
> An 'umble man, humility now flies,
> And as *proud representative*, I rise,
> And join the ladies.

"Well, I *never!*" ejaculated the little grass widow.

"That's a *leetle* more than we bargained for," laughed Mrs. Bartram.

"Hold on a minute, old fellow ; *I'll join too ;*" cried "Old Jinks," making an attempt to again mount his chair, and being suppressed by Monkton. He looked grieved at his endeavours being frustrated, but evidently bore no malice ; for, seizing Cecil's

hand, he said, gently, "God blesh you! God blesh you!" And subsiding well into his chair, he contented himself with murmuring in determined tones, "We will: we will. We do: we do," etc., at intervals during the progress of the rhyme.

Representative:—

> We all most deeply feel the compliment
> You've paid the sex we proudly represent;
> And if we've used you badly, we'll repent.
> We will, we ladies.

Dissentient sounds and sighs from the unrepentant cruel ones.

"Ha, ha! Eh? D'ye hear the young jackanapes? What? They look like repenting, don't they? Eh?" Discordant queries and laughter from old Giles.

Representative:—

> Our journey almost over, we confess
> We thought, at starting, we should like it less,
> And never dreamt of so much happiness
> For us, the ladies.

Contented looks and waving fans amongst the fair ones.

Prolonged guttural sounds from the doctor, terminating in, "Eh? Happiness?

Great heavens! What, what, what? So it is though What?"

Representative :—

We rather liked that rolling in the Bay."

Chorus of ladies :—

Oh! how *can* you, Mr. Daintree?

Representative continuing :—

Sea sickness does one so much good, they say—
And quite *enjoyed* the gale the other day.
We did, we ladies.

Recitative, Mrs. Bartram :—

Just hear the man!

Chorus of ladies :—

Oh! how *can* you, Mr. Daintree?

Representative :—

Of admiration we've received much more
Than falls to us poor tied-up ones on shore;
Our husbands, too, for once, scarce seem to bore
Us *married* ladies.

"How shocking! What a horrid little man he is," laughingly whispered Mrs. Bartram to Jones, the Sapper.

"Too dreadful! Fancy it was true," whispered Jones, the Sapper, to Mrs. Bartram.

"By Jove! you know. He's not far wrong about the admiration on shore. Don't get much of it there. Eh, Maria?" And the gallant Bartram chuckled at his hit at his wife.

Blake looked anxiously at his bride, and frowned ominously on surprising her in a laugh. The only ones who seemed to thoroughly enjoy the joke were the maidens and bachelors.

Representative:—

> And as for us who still unfetter'd fly,
> "E'en soldiers' wives we'll be!" is now our cry.—

"Oh! I'm sure I never—that is—Oh!" Exclamation, profuse blushes, and *collapse* —Miss Stewart.

Representative continuing:—

> Good for naught else—with troopships they'll supply
> Us *single* ladies.

Exultant laughter from elderly married men and matrons, benedicts and brides.

"If I don't pay you out for that, Mr. Francis!" Exclamation, *sotto voce*, Miss Dutton.

"I shall be happy to supply," commenced Hawthorne, looking laughingly towards Blanche; but he was quickly cut short by, "If you please, Captain Hawthorne; *if* you please," from Major Bolton, who, at this stage of the banquet,

evinced a rampant desire to consider *everything* a personal insult. "*This*," he continued, waving his hand comprehensively towards the decanters, and looking at Hawthorne much as though he had caught him playing leap-frog over a near relative's tombstone, "*This* is hardly a fitting time for levity and——"

"Ha, ha! That's on them! What?" jerked out the old doctor, who had been slowly recovering speech since Daintree's last verse. "*Good for nought else*, eh? To it again, my boy. To it again."

Representative :—

> Lastly, we maidens, wives, grass widows hope
> That naval men, when spliced, may *keep the rope*,
> And sailors' wives at sea soon have full scope,
> Like "trooping ladies."

The representative paused here for a moment to murmur fervently to himself, "May Heaven forgive and forget that last wish;" then continued, aloud and rapidly :

> My task is o'er, unshackled is the link
> 'Twixt man and angels;—I, poor man, must sink.
> Still once I was, 'twill be my pride to think,
> A *real* lady.

With a melancholy smile, which only served to increase the general laughter, Daintree divested himself of his sun-bonnet, and resumed his seat.

After a few minutes, Lady Riling bowed to Mrs. Stewart, and they both left the table; the other ladies gradually following their example.

The captain and colonel soon strolled away to have a cigarette in the former's cabin, and shortly afterwards it became evident from the crash of breaking glass and falling chairs, that excitement reigned at the side table.

A final crash, and the inhabitants of "The Palace of the Devils" arose with one fiendish accord, and approached the centre of the long table on the starboard side. In their midst was borne on high the long subaltern, who—taciturn as a general rule—was found by experience to be so irrepressibly loquacious after a big dinner, that Providence appeared to have

specially designed him for occasions like the present.

Placing him upon a chair—an elevated position which obliged him to thrust his head out from between the beams, and assume a stooping, crane-like attitude, by no means conducive to true dignity—the lesser imps fell back, and formed an admiring throng around their *Arch'd* Fiend.

"Off'cers," commenced His Satanic *Highness*, glaring angrily at "Old Jinks," who, on the approach of the deputation, had slowly advanced to meet it. "Off'cers! Messmates! I come to——"

"Hold on minute, old fellow, *I'll come too*," said Jinks; making a vigorous effort to ascend the chair by swarming up the long subaltern's legs.

The head of "Pandemonium" tried hard to hold on by the beams, were it only for a second, but was far too lengthy and shaky about the pins to stand against the fierce energy of the ardent "Jinks." With a

suppressed cry, which might have been a curse, he bent, he fell: "Jinks" did likewise, and received the orator full on his stomach. A groan from the depths of old Jinks' stomach, a growl from the orator, and the latter struggled to his feet, was immediately rushed at, and replaced on high.

"Jinks" having recovered his eye-glass and breath, slowly arose and looked around; when finding everything *in statu quo ante* the fall, he said, with panting, but gentle warmth, "Mind ye, I don't complain. Remember, I bear no malice. Own fault p'raps. But I think; I *do* think, it's *little* hard—sitting on—brother off'cer's stomach. *Ticularly*—I *say*, more *par*tic'ly as I'd ishued no *'nvitations*."

The throng showed unmistakable signs of understanding and appreciating the worthy major's feelings, but the orator, unable to overcome a little natural soreness, was commencing an indignant reply, when

"old Jinks," with a great burst of compassion, said, "God blesh you! God blesh you! I don't complain! *I'll come too*," and once more applied himself diligently to the task of ascending the chair.

"No, you don't. Not *again*, if I know it," resounded from the ceiling, as one long leg was promptly detached for duty from the chair, and poor "old Jinks" once more experienced a "sort of sinking."

"Come along, old fellow," said Monkton, thinking that quite enough sport had been got out of Jinks; "time we were all in bed now."

"Awright," gasped Jinks;" "awright, Monkton. God blesh you! P'raps t'would be better. Don't seem thoroughly 'preciated here."

In ten minutes he was asleep in his cabin, and the number of people who met "old Jinks'" servant next morning, carrying soda, was surprising.

With many sounds of approval from his

supporters, did the long "Elect" of Pandemonium resume his discourse, and the other listeners gradually gathered that "all Pandemonium" felt slighted, inasmuch as not one individual member had been "toasted."

The mistake was speedily and thoroughly rectified, and "all Pandemonium" retired to the side table again.

Remember, reader, that this has been a *special* dinner.

Time passed on! One by one the tables were deserted, and most of the diners *imbunked* themselves in their narrow cells.

Not so, however, did all our messmates; and of those who remained to enjoy yet more of the last night at sea, two couple were on the bridge. Daintree was officer of the first watch, and, with Effie Stewart to help him keep it, did not seem anxious for 12 o'clock. Mrs. Stewart, talking to the captain on the other side of the bridge, was also on watch. "Surely," she was thinking,

"Mr. Daintree will say something definite to her to-night." Vain hope! Daintree was in his most intensely indefinite mood.

They had agreed this evening to exchange photographs, and after much pressing, Effie had promised him that "if mamma did not mind," she would write an account of their journey to Agra. Upon which, Daintree, with his vague inconsistency—more vague, more inconsistent than ever to-night—caught himself wondering whether starting a correspondence with a girl in India might not prove an awful nuisance. The old story! She had shown her heart, and he—no; not quite the old story, for he had not "trampled on it." It had been too easy, that was all. She was all that is nice, all that is charming, *but* it had been so easy. And what was her rank now? "Dear little thing." "Poor little girl." Was he wrong? I give it up. I am a

man. It is human nature, at any rate, not to *trample*; but to *pity*, and—grow weary.

We will leave human nature to fight its own battle against frailty: for us, forgetfulness in sleep seems to present greater advantages than appertain to either trampling or pitying. To bed then. Oblivion.

10.0 a.m., and after a cruise from Portsmouth of a little under five weeks, Colaba lighthouse is within four or five miles of us, with the aristocratic Malabar Hill, in the distance.

Two people upon the poop are too intent upon watching one of those elaborate clocks supplied by the Admiralty to H.M. ships to care much about the beauties of lighthouse or hill. They certainly glance often and anxiously towards Colaba, but with mercenary rather than artistic feelings; for if the *Tigris* passes the lights at any time between 10.15 and 10.30, as shown by the hands of the aforesaid costly

time-piece (three shillings and sixpence contract), they pocket the sweepstakes.

The tide is against us.—10.25! The gong of the tell-tale sounds, and an order is given from the bridge, through the voice-tube, to the engine-room. Should that order have been to "ease the engines," our two mercenary characters will be sold, as Daintree —who is one of them—knows full well, and as Blanche Dutton—who is the other —suspects.

Ten seconds of suspense! Then round goes the screw faster than ever; the order was to *increase* speed, and at 10.29 Miss Dutton and Daintree divide the spoil, which takes the sterling form of twenty sovereigns —no "rupees" *yet.*

Mrs. Stewart, whose "ticket for time" showed 10.30 to 10.45, was of course delighted at dear Blanche's good luck. She said she was, and she ought to know. In another half-hour we are made fast to our buoy in Bombay harbour, and then the fun

begins. "Dug-outs," "dingys," and jolly boats, shove off from the Apollo Bunder, and with their black, bare-skinned paddlers, swarm alongside the port gangway, anxious to take everyone or anyone on shore, for eight, six, four, or even *two* annas.

To the port gangway also, are paddled, in well-cushioned jolly boats, and under gay awnings, Sorabjee the contractor, and many another Manockjee, or Pestonjee; Nourabhoy, or Heerjebhoy; long-white-shirted Parsees, ponderous bellied and indolent, now that their fortune is made; observant as crossing sweepers, obsequious as hair dressers, in the coining.

But, if black and copper-colour have it all their own way on the port side, the starboard is sacred to white, and liver-yellow.

First comes the health officer, anxious to obtain medical information, and constrained to answer volleys of questions from old Giles; then the naval officer of the guard

arrives in the guard boat of the *Briton*, a corvette on the East Indian station, anchored off Bombay, to give "general leave" to her ship's company; then arrive, in quiet succession, the deputy-assistant adjutant-general, the deputy-assistant quartermaster general, the deputy-assistant paymaster-general, the deputy-assistant anything-in-general, certainly nothing in particular, and the Lord knows who besides, all lashed up in spurs, long coats, and brass bound caps, and looking as if they lived on split pegs, "Bombay ducks," and Eno's fruit salt.

Monkton received some eight or ten of these Bombay staff magnates, and also some six or eight Wallahs of other and *more* incomprehensible Bombay growth, who, assuming an air of mystic importance, and dressed in mystic uniforms, came in mysterious boats, flying mysterious flags; shrouded in impenetrable mystery, and the mystic status which thereunto belongs. With distant hauteur they acknowledge the

inquisitive looks which were their due, then clapping the backs of the deputy-assistants aforementioned with familiar mystery, and announcing in mysterious tones, to all whom it might, or might not concern, —and apparently at the particular request, and on the personal authority of the great Architect of the universe,—that the "monsoon would break early this 'yah,'" these mysterious dissemblers departed; and not until a fervent, "Thank God; the worst is over," reached him from the lips of the adjutant, did it burst upon Monkton, with all the "extraordinary violence" of the above-mentioned early monsoon, that to *him* it had been given to entertain the "*Bombay official*" unawares. He had even seen them provided with their favourite meal,—not "Eno's," the other effervescent fluid,—but when a magnate, with a face of melting bees-wax, and the outer man of a counter-jumper, ran his boat "bows on" into the ship's side, and someone said that

he was the acting-deputy-assistant-commissary-general, then Monkton, wiping the perspiration from his brow, murmured that he felt tired, and if wanted *urgently* would be found on the poop, whither he at once repaired to concoct a scheme for the information of the Indian government, by which—with a judicious application of hyphens—the entire staff of the army in India might be reduced to, say, two boys and a man.

Not much chance of concoction on the poop. Each deputy was surrounded by an admiring and curious throng, eager to know all about *their* movements in particular, and India in general. Mrs. Stewart was looking disgusted, because the colonel, her husband, had not been able to leave Agra to meet her; the ex-grass widow was grazing peacefully in her husband's paddock; I should say, was "safe in the arms of her Robert," once more—apparently somewhat to the relief of that recently

nourished viper, the long subaltern, who witnessed the loving reunion over the heads of some scores of his shipmates; whilst a jabbering crowd of would-be "butlers," "boys," and "dobashes" clamoured for engagement, and magnificently turbanned, largely plated Putti Wallahs from "Watson's," "the Byculla," "the Adelphe," etc., salaamed profoundly, and noiselessly disposed of the printed advantages of their respective hotels.

Winding his way slowly aft, Monkton suddenly found himself within a foot or two of Effie Stewart, who was gazing, with something of fear and a vastness of disgust at a more than usually undraped Hindoo. She blushed, as was her modest wont, when looked at; and Monkton, observing a snake charmer and his meagre boy about to perform near the Wheel House, took her off to see the fun.

"What dreadful looking men they are!" she whispered. "I never thought they

would be so—so—that they would have such few things on. They don't dress like men a *bit*, and they are so black! Ugh!"

Monkton laughed. "That's just it," said he. "It's black, so it doesn't matter. Think it's cloth."

Effie smiled, and blushed a little more, then shuddered, as a Putti Wallah thrust his black hand, holding a ticket, against the "Mem Sahib," as he supposed her. A good large group had collected around the snake charmer.

"Seet down! Seet down, Sah-habb!" he was vociferating, whilst preparing his apparatus. "Ram, Sammy; come soon, Sah-habb; yaas, yaas! Per-haps Ram Sammy come soon!" His assistant rattles the wooden drum, whilst *he* lifts the lid of one of his snake baskets and occasionally blows his pipe. "Cobra! cob-r-ra! cob-r-ra! co-br-r-ra. Kir-rack! kir-r-rack! kir-r-rack! kir-r-rack!" The cobras lift their flat heads, peer suspiciously around, and

are once more thrust back, and shut into their basket. "Snake an' mongoose, he fight!" continues the charmer.—Exhibition by meagre boy of ordinary snake and mongoose.—"Snake, he fat; mongoose, he fat; ver good, snake; ver good, mongoose; kir-r-r-ack! kir-r-r-ack! kir-r-r-ack! kir-r-r-ack! Seet down, sah-habb, seet down! Makey grow mango tree; yaas! yaas! Ver good! *One* rupee, sah-habb, *one* rupee, you givey? Makey grow *big* mango tree; fat mango, makey grow." And so on, and so on. His tricks—the ordinary Indian juggler's—were good, and the mongoose effectually settled the wriggle of any snakes that were brought to his notice. But poor Effie was melancholy, and would not be comforted. Meeting papa, the colonel, after their long separation, had no charms for her; it would but serve to remind her of that other and longer separation which would commence to-day. Daintree, too, was uneasy. The impulsive officer mistrusted

his own powers of discretion and silence. That afternoon the soldiers disembarked, amidst lots of wishes for future meetings with "old ships." Miss Dutton had decided on staying at "Watson's," with the Faulkners, whilst the *Tigris* remained in harbour, and, if the necessary chaperone was forthcoming, going back to Portsmouth in her. The old doctor's remark at dinner last night—*àpropos* of Daintree's wedding rings—to the effect that Miss Dutton had not much doubt as to what would become of one of them, was not far wrong. At all events, the young lady in question intended having another try for it on the return journey.

Mrs. Stewart and Effie started that same evening for Agra, Captain Braddon and Daintree in attendance to see them off. Poor little Effie was dreadfully dismal, and at that last supreme moment, Daintree might have pleased Mrs. S. by saying "something definite," from simple inability

to say "anything indefinite," had not a timely interruption occurred, in the form of a particularly robust, though ragged, native, who shuffled towards them with both hands extended and both eyes closed. His tone was courteous, but of an intense sadness, as salaaming, reverently, he said, "I beg ten thousand pardons, Sahib, but me, only poor blindie man. Pa-pa, no got! Ma-ma, no got. I only poorie man. Sahib, give me *one* pie! God bless you, Sahib." The blessing was bestowed upon Daintree, who had handed him two annas, with a request to "Jao."

"Ma-ma, no got! Sahib, give poor blindie man *two* annas." This modest request was addressed to Captain Braddon, who did *not* give two annas, but who echoed Daintree's "Jao," and gave the "poor blindie man" material assistance in a rather quick and involuntary passage to the nearest wall.

Arrived there, the unfortunate orphan

squatted down against it, opened his eyes, smiled pleasantly, and commenced to chew betel nut. After this, what chance for sentiment? The train rushed merrily out with certainly two fair passengers, and the captain and Daintree took a buggy to the Byculla Club. A generous man, the latter! Just as they were starting from the station he said, "Oh, hold on a minute, sir; I've forgotten something," and ran back to the wall to gladden the heart and eventually, the stomach of that mourning pa-pa and ma-ma loser with a *whole rupee*. A generous man, but an eccentric; for why should he single out that impostor as a fitting object for alms? Above all, why smile upon that bereaved Hindoo, and pause awhile to slap him on his low caste back, and exclaim, gaily, "By Jove, old fellow, near as a toucher! Thought I was in for it. You were a regular God-send!" Echo answers, why? The Hindoo didn't, because he was unversed in more of the English

language than was necessary to explain his blind and desolate condition. But he smiled and salaamed, and said that he was "only a poorie man," and would Sahib give him *one rupee*? Such is gratitude; such, generosity; such, eccentricity. Still, Daintree repined not. If anything, he was easier in his mind than during the early part of that *last* day.

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H.M.S. *Tigris* will probably remain for several weeks at Bombay, and we may as well look in again at Westfield, Sussex.

END OF VOL. II.

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